

THE STORY OF
NEW BRITAIN





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The Story of
NEW BRITAIN
CONNECTICUT



DOOR-WAY OF COL. ISAAC LEE HOUSE

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1925

THE STORY OF
NEW BRITAIN
CONNECTICUT

WRITTEN BY
LILLIAN HART TRYON
FROM
HISTORICAL SKETCHES
BY MORTIMER WARREN



PUBLISHED BY
ESTHER STANLEY CHAPTER
D. A. R.

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HARTFORD, CONNECTICUT

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Preface

ESTHER STANLEY CHAPTER, *Daughters of the American Revolution*, has undertaken, as a part of its patriotic work, to publish a short story of New Britain's past.

Their starting-point was a series of articles on the history of New Britain, by Mortimer Warren, which were published in the *New Britain Record*, in 1917. The source books of his, as of all studies of New Britain, up to the present, are, the "History of New Britain" by Prof. David N. Camp, and the "History of the First Ecclesiastical Society," by Prof. Alfred Andrews. Mr. Warren made a judicious selection of material appropriate to a short, popular history, and laid it out according to a well-defined and effective plan, with a view to interesting youthful readers, especially.

The committee who had in charge the matter of publishing a history, obtained from Mr. Warren his scrap-books containing the series, together with his consent to use them. Their first idea was to re-print the articles, as a book for boys and girls.

But, as committee and writer pondered over the project, and consulted the wisdom of others, they found the scope and motive of the work broadening. With constant reference to the books of Professor Camp and Professor Andrews, and a reading of Hollister's *History of Connecticut*, the writer has attempted, not only to give a clear narrative, but to indicate what is typical and what is exceptional in the story of New Britain. The Committee hopes thus to interest citizens old and young, and also citizens old and new.

LILLIAN HART TRYON

February 6, 1925.

I

The Great Swamp
and its
Hill Barriers

Chapter I

The View from Walnut Hill

ALL who live in New Britain have one feeling in common,—pride in Walnut Hill Park, and in the view from the top of Walnut Hill itself. We make the little climb more than once a year, it is to be hoped; and we take our visitors from out-of-town to the summit, anticipating a show of amazement and delight at the varied landscape, and rarely being disappointed. We trace the course of highways and railways, and point out with a feeling of proprietorship, the steeples, chimneys, and roofs we know, and the beauty of the hill masses around the town. If the day is clear, we catch the glint of the Capitol dome at Hartford, and the mysterious blue of the band of hills along the eastern horizon; while in all directions the encircling hills just beyond the city cast picturesque silhouettes against the sky.

We recite their names, as we point them out, telling our visitors that behind Cedar Mountain to the east lies Wethersfield, and under it on our side the village of Newington; farther to the southeast rises Mt. Lamentation, and behind it lies Middletown; at the westerly edge of the wide level stretch toward the south, the Hanging Hills begin, this side of Meriden, and stretch around the southwestern horizon, in shapes of dreamy beauty which well deserve their name. Shuttle-meadow Mountain, and Cook's Gap, hide from us the towns of Plainville and Southington, to the westward; and Farmington, our mother-town, lies behind her own mountain, northwest of us.

Aside from the rugged mountain-barriers surrounding our central plain, the most striking feature of the landscape seen from Walnut Hill, is the series of rounded hills, of which this is one, which seem to make a line across the center of the basin, from north to south. These softly rounded hills are called drumlins, and are, geologically speaking, much younger than the barrier-hills, being

deposits left in the track of a mighty glacier as it moved southward, ages after the lava of the mountains poured red hot from the interior of the earth.

Yet, unless we look at the scene from Walnut Hill with New Britain's story in mind, we cannot read the full meaning of it; any more than the early settlers of Farmington could foresee it, when from the brow of their mountain they looked across the vast, low-lying, mountain-encircled region. They named it "The Great Swamp;" and in that name we may read a hint of the difficulty, and invitation, and mystery, which it held for their pioneering souls.

Chapter II

The Geological Story of New Britain

ALTHOUGH from Walnut Hill the mountains seem almost to encircle New Britain, that is not a correct impression. They are really a single, broken series of low mountains, which begins in Massachusetts and extends through the middle of Connecticut from north to south. This mountain chain, which is so low that it has no distinguishing name, has higher peaks and ridges which have separate names: Mount Tom and Mt. Holyoke, in Massachusetts; in Connecticut, Talcott and Rattlesnake Mountains, Cook's Gap and Sunset Rock, The Hanging Hills, Mt. Lamentation, and others.

The rock of which the entire range is composed is trap-rock, or, to give the more precise name, basalt, a form of lava. The lava of these mountains poured out from the interior of the earth in ages long gone by, through cracks in the surface which ran in a general direction of north and south; and as it cooled it spread in huge sheets over the land to east and west. If we examine these rock-masses, we shall find that they tended to form columns and blocks, and that when broken into pieces and bits, the fragments are still block-shaped. This column-like structure may be detected, here and there, at Cook's, and everywhere that basalt is found. The most perfect example of basalt columns is to be seen in Fingal's Cave, on the Island of Staffa.

The surface over which the lava flowed was sandstone. We are told that there were at least three different eruptions of lava, between which the sandstone continued to be deposited in layers. Sandstone and basalt are therefore to be found, somewhat irregularly mingled.

Climate, through countless winters and summers, acted upon basalt and sandstone; heat and cold, fire and ice, rain and snow, worked upon them, slowly disintegrated them; and flowing water carried the loosened particles toward the sea, dropping more or less of it to the bottom, as its flow was slow or swift.

The sandstone, being softer, wore away first, leaving the hard basaltic rock to stand out, in the age of Man, as a range of low, worn-down mountains, with one slope, that toward the east, gradual, while the western edge is higher, always abrupt, and sometimes precipitous. There are gaps in the range, through some of which rivers flow, from west to east. Through the break between Mt. Tom and Mt. Holyoke the Connecticut makes its way; through the chasm at Tariffville the Farmington flows. Did a river ever flow through Cook's Gap? According to the geologists' reasoning, not only was there a river in Cook's Gap, but it actually made the gap, by wearing at a cleft in the rock, through ages of time. It is supposed to have been a distant predecessor of the Farmington river which accomplished this tremendous work. But, the geologists tell us, when in the course of ages the sandstone on the western side of the range was worn down to a lower level than the floor of the gap itself, then the course of the river was diverted, and it began to flow southward along the low valley on the western side of the mountain, through the regions we now know as Southington and Cheshire, to Long Island Sound.

But what, in its turn, must have caused the river to turn from its southerly course, and to flow instead through the chasm at Tariffville? The answer to this question is to be looked for, not in the outpour of lava which created the mountains, nor in the action of water in wearing them away; but in the other great force which has had its share in modeling the surface of the earth as it is today, the working of Ice.

The geologists tell us that during the Ice Age, when all the northern part of this continent was covered with a sheet of ice, the eastern edge of it was over the New England States. This glacier, moving slowly southward toward the sea, dropped quantities of sand, pebbles, and even boulders of considerable size, which it had picked up far in the north. In places, the glacier left a layer of material crushed and packed together by the weight of the ice into a rocky soil called hard-pan. The hard-pan, or till, was sometimes spread out thin over a great area, sometimes rolled up into heaps, or rounded hills, and sometimes dragged together in long ridges. The scattered boulders and the level layers of hard-pan were dropped by

the glacier in passing over the land. The hills, or drumlins, and the ridges, or eskers, seem to have been left in their position by the melting of the glacier.

Our fields are covered with rounded pebbles of many kinds, and dotted with boulders that did not come from the mountains we can see. They vary in material, shape, and size, but they share one common characteristic, the marks of the ice. They are rounded and smoothed, and the larger ones especially have parallel scratches and scorings. We are grateful to the ice for our drumlins in their shapeliness and greenness. But what about the eskers? We are told that we may see an esker in Cook's Gap, and one at the eastern end of Compounce Pond, in each of which places it acts as a dam.

The retreating ice left so much debris in the northern part of Southington, as to stop the river which had been there, from its southward course. The pond formed by this great dam might more properly have been called a lake; for it extended along the western base of the mountain ridge, through the regions where now are situated the towns of Plainville, Farmington, Avon, and Simsbury, to Tariffville, making a body of water some twenty miles long, and from three to four miles wide, in some places. This lake, which had once, in by-gone ages, been a river flowing south, and again, in the Age of Ice, a current beneath a mighty glacier, remained a lake for another long period of time, until the chasm at Tariffville was worn down to a level lower than its bed. Then it poured into that chasm, and has since followed the channel then formed, as the Farmington river. The bottom of the lake, left bare when the water began to flow through the Tariffville chasm, became the flat sandy plain which it is today.

Chapter III

Streams of the Great Swamp

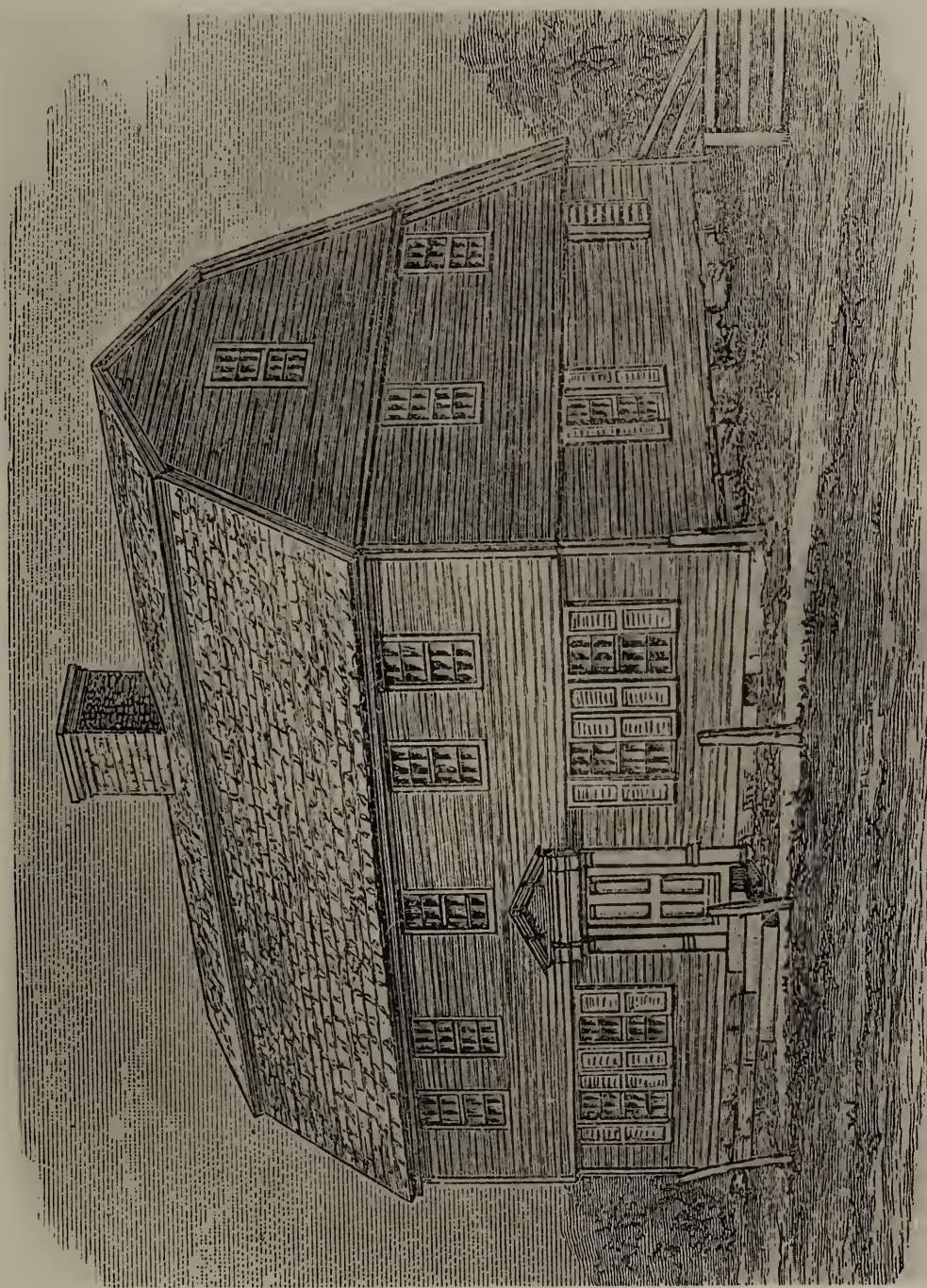
BUT thus far we have learned nothing of the water-courses of the Great Swamp. To the observer of the present day, these are neither large nor numerous. With our thoughts on the geological changes wrought by time, we wonder what streams and lakes once existed in the Great Swamp region, and what their resulting streams are in the age of Man.

The ancient river which geologists say once broke eastward through Cook's Gap, has no modern counterpart. The floor west of the Gap being lower than the gradual sloping hills of the eastern side, any water thereabouts spills westward. So the cluster of ponds at Cook's, fed by the little brook that comes down from Horse Plain, flows through the Gap to Plainville, and thence south to the Sound, as the Quinnipiack river. It is the only westward-flowing stream in the Great Swamp region.

The other streams of the Great Swamp have a general easterly direction. The largest of them, the Mattabesett river, rises in the western mountain boundary of the region, crosses through Kensington, and the plain, and with rather winding course passes, south of Cedar Mountain, through East Berlin to the Connecticut. There are numerous ponds along its course, most of which are the result of dams built for their mills by the early settlers.

The Mattabesett has two tributaries in Great Swamp,— Belcher's Brook, which flows through the plain west of Worthington Ridge or Berlin street, and joins the main stream half a mile south of the Berlin fair grounds; from the north side, Willow Brook drains the lowland west of Walnut Hill, supplies the pond at the foot of Arch street, and falls, at Mill street, to the level stretch of plain below.

This plain is interesting to students of New Britain history. Beginning on the west with the drop from high ground to low at the



HOUSE OCCUPIED BY REV. NEWTON SKINNER

BUILT by Josiah Lee, and sold by him to John Richards, in 1776. Bought by Rev. Newton Skinner, pastor of the First Church, and occupied by him soon after his marriage in 1815.

southeast corner of New Britain, down Sandbank hill to the Beech Swamp road, it extends in width a mile or more, northward almost to Newington, eastward toward Beckley quarter, and southward beyond the drumlin on the crest of which is Worthington Ridge. Three streams, as we have seen, fall into this plain, the Mattabesett and its two tributaries. It is dotted over with brick-yards and clay-pits. Our geological friends tell us that this plain, like that to the west of our mountain wall, must once have been a lake, perhaps the remote beginning of the Mattabesett river. The difference between them is that while the deposit on the western lake floor was sand, that on this plain was from a different kind of rock, and made the clay floor.

The Great Swamp probably included this low-lying and truly swampy plain; but the part which is now New Britain is so much higher than the surrounding country that streams flow from it, not in one or two directions, but in three. The third brook, of useful history, but unsavory reputation, flows north-eastward into the Connecticut. It rises, a tiny stream, in the meadow southwest of the Stanley Works, and after passing through Lockshop Pond, disappears into the sewers of the city, to emerge again into the light of day at East Street.

In the days when New Britain was still Great Swamp, this stream followed a channel now covered by the railroad tracks as far as Main Street; thence it turned south-eastward to the low swampy ground east of Main Street, and passed through that eastward, following a course along which Hartford Avenue has been laid, to the Connecticut at Hartford.

Piper's Brook has two branches from the northeastern part of Great Swamp. It is the most important of all the streams of the vicinity, in the development of the little settlement which grew into the city of New Britain.

II

The Great Swamp Settlement

Chapter IV

English Pioneers in Connecticut

FROM mother-country to mother-town! That is the reason why we must stop here, just as we get fairly started, to refresh our memories of English history. We have to realize that the Stuart Kings were rulers of New England as well as of Old England, and that happenings in the New World were more or less directly affected by events at home.

The first two Stuarts,—holding that the doctrine of the Divine Right of Kings to exercise control over the destinies of their people, could be proved by putting it into rigid practice,—made living in England impossible for some of their subjects who held different views. To preserve their freedom, many Englishmen left homes, property, and country, and emigrated, first to Holland, then to the New World.

The little company that settled at Plymouth in 1620 brought with them the language, traditions, and religious ideals, of their fathers. Within twenty years after their arrival, the coast of Massachusetts Bay was dotted with settlements, and more than twenty thousand English Puritans were living in New England. English laws and customs prevailed; the officials of the government held their licenses from England. And all up and down the land, from sailors, craftsmen, farmers, children, mothers, and preachers, but one language was heard, the English tongue.

The settlements were close together, and growing in population. Adventurers who went on exploring parties through the forests and along the watercourses, brought back glowing reports of good farming land and plenty of room for all, in the country to the south. There appear to have been bitter discussions as to the wisdom or need of such expansion; but at length three parties of pioneers made their way through the wilderness to Connecticut. The party from Watertown settled at Wethersfield; that from Dorchester at Windsor; those we are chiefly concerned with in this narrative, came

from Newtown, or Cambridge, to the river at the point where Hartford now is.

These pioneers, or immigrants, walked all the way. Their party, like the other pioneer groups, was the nucleus of a complete town; for they had their flocks and herds, their household goods and portable furniture, even their church, in the persons of the deacons and the minister. The name of that minister, the Rev. Thomas Hooker, should ever be held in honor by all citizens of Connecticut for his good sense, his vision, and his liberal views toward men of convictions differing from his own. His influence upon his church and upon the development of the colony was great.

The little party crossed the Connecticut river at Hartford, and upon the brow of the sloping western bank built a line of log houses. The path that connected them is now Hartford's busiest street. New Britain is only ten miles away, but the Great Swamp remained a wilderness for another fifty years. The pioneering spirit of the Hartford settlement showed itself in the taking up of land along the Tunxis river, where broad natural meadows offered to a few adventurous young folks great opportunities for farming. The little plantation was for some time known by the name of the river, but in the records of the Connecticut Colony we read,

"December ye first, 1645, it's ordered that ye plantation called Tunxis shall be called ffarmington."

From "ffarmington" in turn, some of the young people made the venture of clearing new farms for themselves in Great Swamp.

All this story, reaching from England to Walnut Hill, belongs in the story of New Britain. But, it is a part of English history, too. Farmington was named in the year in which King Charles the First was defeated by Cromwell. Three years later, it may well have happened (who knows?) that hunters, returning to Farmington street after a day's hunt with dogs and guns in the Great Swamp, found the people there excited and anxious because of news just received from Hartford. The King was dead! And, dead through revolution! They had led him out through a window of his own State banquet-hall, to the scaffold, and there, before a great crowd of on-lookers, beheaded him! England,—and New England—were without a King.

Now, the very ones who were thus anxious and bewildered had not loved King Charles or his father overmuch. In fact, it was because of the tyrannous exactions of the kings and their ministers that they had been forced to leave England, and were living here in the wilderness. Yet, like the good Englishmen they still were, they were accustomed to respect their sovereigns even when they did not like their ways. And doubtless they wondered whether the new administration would make any change in their own affairs.

We must associate with the reign of Charles II one of the most important events of our early history, the granting of Connecticut's charter. We are all familiar, or should be, with the story of the Charter Oak, and the dramatic scenes which took place when the agents of James II tried to revoke that Charter, and get it back again.

The settlement of Great Swamp was begun about the time that James II came to the throne, 1685. The settlers, a mere handful, came from Farmington, in much the same way as their parents and grandparents had gone out to Farmington from Hartford, some forty years before. They built a little stockade for refuge in case of need; but all through the reign of James, and of his successors, William and Mary, they had to go back to Farmington to church. And, since they were church-going people, we may imagine the little procession of men, women, and children, including the babies, making the weary trudge over hill to Farmington, some on horses and some afoot. It is told that the women and children were placed in the middle of the column, and that the men, carrying their guns, walked ahead and behind. Sunday must have been a weary day, in spite of the interest of the services and the excitement of meeting friends; no doubt men and women both sighed for a meeting-house and a minister of their own.

During the reign of Queen Anne, the people of Great Swamp received an answer to their petition to be made a separate parish, while remaining, for the time, a part of the town of Farmington.

But to whom did they address their petition? Was it to Queen Anne? Queen Anne probably never so much as heard of the Great Swamp.

Was there, then, a government in Connecticut to which they

could appeal? Assuredly there was. Three years after the settlement of Hartford, in 1639, the three settlements on the Connecticut united to form the self-governing colony of Connecticut. Representatives of the people drew up a constitution, establishing a General Court to have charge of public matters. This General Court consisted of the Governor and a Legislature of elected representatives. To them were submitted such questions as the creation of new parishes, and town governments. Under the Charter, this Court had even greater powers. The New Haven Colony was united with the Connecticut colony, the boundary lines of the state were set; and the state of Connecticut exerted full power as a government.

Chapter V

Early Roads of the Great Swamp

IN order to locate the houses of the earliest settlers in the Great Swamp district, we must look ahead a little, and find out where the earliest roads were made.

Possibly the very first road through the Great Swamp was one which connected the cluster of huts where the Tunxis Indians dwelt, with the village of the Mattabesett Indians, which is thought to have been situated in the southeast corner of the Great Swamp, in the section now called Beckley Quarter. It was no road at all, properly speaking, but a mere trail; it probably led from Beckley Quarter through the part of the Swamp which is now New Britain, and across the mountain to Farmington. Its course is not now known; but it may well have been the trail which the first white men followed who ventured into the Swamp from Farmington.

Strange to say, the first white men's road through the Great Swamp was not made by the first settlers from Farmington, but by people travelling between Hartford and New Haven. This was a mere path, rather than a road; worn by use, rather than built, and probably used by travellers on horses and not fit for wagons. It ran through the lowland at the foot of Worthington Ridge, and was undoubtedly in use during the reign of Charles II, when interviews on the subject of uniting the two colonies under the charter were frequent (and stormy). All trace of it in the immediate vicinity of New Britain has now disappeared. It was replaced by a road built along the top of the ridge, now called Berlin Street, which was in use in the eighteenth century. Washington rode over it from Hartford to New Haven, in 1789, when he was President. A tablet on the front of the old house where he stopped to rest and breakfast commemorates the incident, and Washington himself recorded it in his diary, under date of Nov. 10, 1789:

“Left Hartford about seven o'clock, breakfasted at Worthington in the Township of Berlin, at the house of one Fullar.”

On this road, called the "Hartford and New Haven Path," Richard Beckley of the New Haven colony secured a large tract of land, where he laid out a farm, and built a house. The district is still known as "Beckley Quarter."

One of the earliest roads to be actually laid out in the Great Swamp itself, had the quaint name of Christian Lane. It ran for a mile, north and south, through the plain at the southeastern edge of New Britain. It still exists, with some of the early landmarks. No road leads directly to it from the center of New Britain; but one may reach its northern end from Kelsey street, just east of the railroad track, and may travel its length, through brick-yards part of the way, to its southern end, between the Berlin Fairgrounds and Worthington Ridge.

Another road, which must have been in use in the very early days of the Great Swamp settlement, crossing Christian Lane at its southern end, runs from there westward, keeping close, for most of the way, to the bed of the Mattabesett river. This road seems to have been begun as a path from the settlement to the mills, which we may be sure were early established near the head of the river. It had different names at different points; but for convenience we may call it the Mattabesett Road. It may be followed today, and is a familiar walk or drive, from Christian Lane past the Berlin fair grounds, crossing the Mattabesett near the long railroad bridge, past the reservoir for the railroad shops and the pond of the Paper Goods Company, crossing an old road in the western part of the Great Swamp district, which was long known as West Lane.

The road which now connects the railroad station at Berlin with Worthington Ridge, is much later than either Christian Lane or Mattabesett Road. But at the point where Mattabesett Road crosses it, opposite the old Berlin fair grounds, stands a landmark of early days, an old house. This house, or an earlier one on the same spot, was the home of Deacon Thomas Hart, and was an important spot in the history of the little community at Christian Lane.

The Beech Swamp Road connects New Britain with the district of the first Great Swamp settlers. It runs from the foot of South Main Street to join the old Mattabesett Road at the stone railway bridge. At first it probably crossed the river higher up, com-

ing out on the level ground near the Ledge schoolhouse. The Beech Swamp Road must have been much used in Colonial times; and probably was a line of travel for those going between the Great Swamp and Farmington. It figures in New Britain's early history, too; for when New Britain was cut off from Kensington the line of separation was drawn through the bridge of the Beech Swamp Road at the foot of South Main street.

Main street may have been a part of that early pathway; but it could have been nothing more. The earliest settlements of the Great Swamp lay to the east and to the south of it. Indeed, the ground now occupied by the Park in the center of the town, was very swampy, with a marsh to the east, and a high hill to the west. That situation offered little attraction to farmers!

The roads mentioned thus far are roads of the oldest section in date of settlement. New Britain was settled a little later; and the roads and streets which the settlers laid out to make passage convenient between houses, mills, taverns, and meeting-house, will be studied as we go on in the history of the Great Swamp.

Great Swamp Settlement and Parish 1686—1722

CHRISTIAN Lane is a lovelier name than Great Swamp. It seems as though the first settlers used for their village the name by which the district was already known; but they chose their own name for the street they made through it, and called it Christian Lane. The story of New Britain really begins with the settlement in Christian Lane of a little company of pioneers from Farmington, led by Captain Richard Seymour.

The Christian Lane settlement was merely a fortified enclosure, at first. The Mattabesett Indians seemed friendly, but King Philip's war had just ended, and there had been treacherous attacks by Indians upon farmers and fishermen along the Connecticut. Captain Seymour was a soldier; and his first care was to provide a place of safety in case of attack.

Exactly speaking, the fort was only a stockade of high, heavy stakes, sharpened at the top. The first cabins or huts of the settlers were built within the stockade, and a deep well of pure and abundant water was dug. For a time the stockade was doubtless the common home of all the settlers; but as they cleared the land and built more substantial houses, the place of refuge was less used, and at length disappeared. A brickyard now occupies a part of its site; the well, however, is said to have furnished good water, up to a comparatively recent time.

The palisade was built and the well dug, in the beginning of the reign of James II, the King who sent Andros to demand the surrender of Connecticut's Charter. In the winter of 1686-7, the little party of pioneers was well established. They prospered so well, that other immigrants came to enlarge the village, and to take up land in outlying districts. In the reign of Queen Anne, the district was sufficiently strong in numbers and in prospects of permanence



JUDAH HART HOUSE

BUILT by Judah Hart, who settled in Hart Quarter about 1734. This house, and that of his kinsman Elijah Hart, gave the name to the south-western part of Great Swamp settlement.

so that the General Court, or Legislature passed a law creating Great Swamp a "Society."

It is necessary to understand what was meant by this term. The Puritans seem to have shrunk from using the word "parish," because of its associations with autocratic management. They preferred the word "Society." A "society," therefore, in the sense in which it applied to their villages and neighborhoods, was a community of people, living within certain territorial boundaries, and having, as a parish had, a church and minister, schools and taxes. It was a little local government, having power to lay taxes for the support of churches and schools.

The new Society of Great Swamp had a meeting-house. Like the fort, it was built in Christian Lane, but not at the fort. On the hill near the end of Christian Lane, stood the first meeting house. No trace of it is left now; but a small monument near the site states the facts. Not far from the old meeting house a suitable spot was chosen for a burying ground. The first to be laid there was Captain Seymour, who was killed by a falling tree. Upon the tombstones of this old cemetery, are names of families still associated with New Britain. The Emma Hart Willard Chapter, Daughters of the American Revolution, have cared for the old burying ground in a suitable and patriotic manner. They have put a durable fence around it, have cleared the enclosure of briars and weeds, and have placed near the entrance a large boulder, upon which, deeply chiseled, are to be read the family names of many, if not all, of the early settlers of the society, including a large part of the region now called New Britain.

Christian Lane was very close to the town line of Wethersfield. As new settlers took up land in Great Swamp, they occupied territory west and north of the Christian Lane village. It was not very many years before this ceased to be a central or even a convenient point for the people of Great Swamp to reach on Sundays.

The location of the meeting-house was an important matter, which touched all the members of the Society. Agitations, discussions, dissensions, went on; the community grew rapidly.

Ten years after the creation of the Great Swamp Society, its name was changed to one with a more worldly sound, Kensington.

The Kensington Society 1722—1754

THE Kensington Society was identical, except in name, with the Great Swamp Society. Those who were voters in the Great Swamp Society before the change of name, were voters in the Kensington Society, after the change of name. They were also voters in the present town of Farmington. In the Society, they voted on all parish and home questions. In Farmington, they voted upon questions of town governments, and elected their representatives to the General Court, or Legislature. They themselves were eligible as candidates. Two of the deacons of the Kensington Church, for example, Anthony Judd and Thomas Hart, more than once represented the town at the General Court.

The voters of the Kensington Society, almost as soon as the new name came into use, had two questions to decide upon, of great importance to the community. They had to resolve upon the location of the new meeting-house, and the new school-house.

The old meeting-house in Christian Lane, the religious and social center of the settlement, had ceased to be the geographical center. There were settlers on the higher land to the north and west, almost as soon as in Christian Lane; and as people became acquainted with the Great Swamp territory they chose locations suitable for their farms and mills, regardless of the distance from Christian Lane and the protected village. The minister, Mr. Burnham, for example, had built a house on Mattabesett Road, not far from the junior deacon, Thomas Hart. The senior deacon, Thomas Judd, lived on South Stanley street, a half-mile or more from the Beech Swamp bridge. Another of the pillars of the church, Captain Stephen Lee, lived on East Street, at the point where Smalley street now joins it.

In many of these scattered families were children who were to be sent to school. The following report of a committee on schools

shows that the Kensington Society followed the plan used in other scattered communities of the colonies:

"This Society being so very scattering in distances, and our ways so very difficult, for small children to pass to a general School in the Society great part of the year, We the Subscribers advice is, that this society be divided into 5 parts or Squaddams for the more convenient schooling the children."

Following this advice, the district system was adopted in the Kensington parish, or Society, including that part of it which is now New Britain. School-houses are still to be seen throughout the old Kensington Society's territory that were used as district schools in the early days.

But the question concerning the location of a meeting-house was not to be settled by division into districts. The population of Kensington parish had grown with the arrival of new settlers, and had been further added to by acquisition of new territory from the adjacent edges of Meriden and Wethersfield. For some years, the majority of the population of the parish was to the south and west of its center. Yet an alert and pugnacious minority dwelt in the north-eastern corner, and a considerable and dignified proportion along the eastern side. It was a community with little save name to hold it together. On one point only were they agreed, that the new meeting-house must be built in a different place than the old one at the end of Christian Lane. At length, after many indecisive votes had been taken, the General Court was appealed to, to settle the dead-lock. The Court referred the matter to a committee, with power to act; and we read in a report which they subsequently made to the Legislature, their statement that they had "set up and finished a meeting-house by the apple-tree in Deacon Thomas Hart's home lot."

This, the second meeting-house of the Society, was situated about ten rods east of Deacon Hart's house, facing Mattabesett Road. Its location was as nearly convenient for the whole parish as possible, being on a well-travelled road, and nearly at the geographical center of the parish. The members of the church seem to have taken pride in it at first, for we learn from the records of the Society of payments made "for sweeping the meeting-house," and

of the purchase of an hour-glass for the pulpit, and a drum to be beaten announcing the service on Sunday morning. Somewhat later an order was given to procure a "cushing" for the pulpit of suitable and "proper fashin."

The minister, Mr. Burnham, had a house given to him, not far from the meeting-house. His successor, Rev. Samuel Clark, built for himself a substantial mansion of brick, about forty rods west of the meeting-house. It still stands, unostentatiously exemplifying the dignity and charm of an eighteenth century dwelling.

The Kensington Society covered too much territory to handle its affairs with ease. For fifteen years the members who lived in the north-east section of the parish, petitioned the General Court to be allowed to withdraw, or, failing that, to be excused from their part of the minister's dues during the four months of the year when the roads were bad. At last the society of New Britain was set off, by the east-and-west line through Beech Swamp bridge. Somewhat later the eastern and the western parts of the parish were separated. The committee of arbitration which assisted them in settling the new boundaries was headed by Col. John Worthington of Springfield, Mass. The new parish was named Worthington, in tribute to his friendly service.

Chapter VIII

The New Britain Society

AFTER Mr. Burnham died, there was an interval of six years, when the Kensington Society was without a pastor. During that time, the members of the Society who lived in the northern part of the Great Swamp district, once again begged leave of the General Court to withdraw from the Kensington Society and become a separate parish. They had made two other attempts which were unsuccessful; but in May, 1754, the General Court, or Legislature passed an act creating the parish, or Society, of New Britain.

The act is recorded, in part, as follows:

“May, 1754. An act Limiting the bounds of the Parish of Kensington and for establishing one other Ecclesiastical Society in Farmington in the County of Hartford.”

“Be it enacted by the Governor & Council & Representatives in Gen. Court assembled and by authority of the same. That the bounds of the parish of Kensington for the future shall extend no farther North than to the East and West line drawn across the Bridge called the Beach Swamp Bridge, from Wethersfield town line to Southington parish line.”

“And be it further Enacted by the Authority aforesaid, that there shall be one other Ecclesiastical Society erected & made & is hereby created & made within the bounds of the town of Farmington, & described as follows:”

The Act then defines the bounds at the east, west, and north of the new parish, the southern boundary having already been given. These bounds correspond very nearly with the boundaries of the town of New Britain today. The name of the new parish is then given:

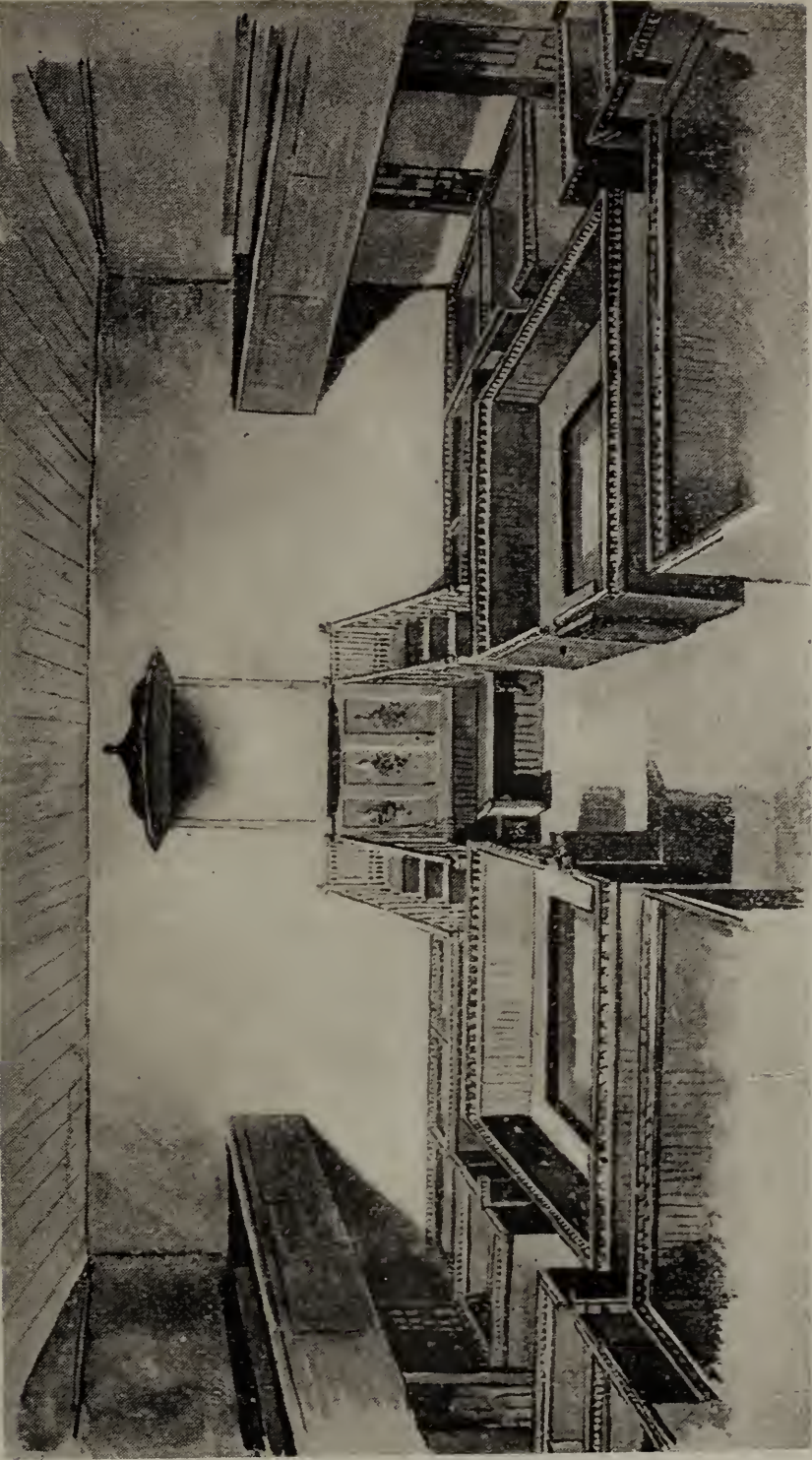
“& the same is hereby created and made one distinct Ecclesiastical Society, & shall be known by the name of New Briton, with the powers and priviledges that other Ecclesiastical Societies by law have in this colony.”

It is said that the man who chose the name for the new parish was Col. Isaac Lee, whose house once stood at the head of Main Street, at the corner of North Street. Whether Col. Lee did or did not choose the name, he was, without doubt, one of the leaders in the effort to secure the new parish. He was the grandson of Captain Stephen Lee, whose house was on East Street, and whose farm extended from East Street to Main. Col. Lee, like his grandfather, had been a member of the Kensington Society; he was a farmer, and a magistrate, a man greatly respected.

From this point on, the history of New Britain lies within the boundary of our present city. Not all the members of the New Britain Society had belonged to the Kensington Society. Some families in the extreme north-eastern edge, had belonged to the Newington Society, and transferred their citizenship to the nearer church. Some families in the north and northwest of the new town, who had kept their connection with the Farmington church, now joined with the others of their vicinity in enlarging the numbers of the New Britain Society.

We can imagine the lively interest shown in the location of the new meeting-house, which was to be the center of the village life; and the earnest discussions as to ways and means of building it, and of procuring a pastor. For, it appears that the people of New Britain, though industrious and successful, were not well supplied with cash; and that the taxes laid upon them for the expenses of the French-and-Indian War, took a large part of their public fund.

The spot at length chosen, was in the center of the settlement, according to the survey of the territory made by a Farmington surveyor,—the ground of which a small triangle is now Smalley Park. They were two years building their church, and another three before the permanent pews, and the galleries, were added. If ever a church was built by popular contribution, this was. The story of it is all in the records of meetings of the Society (the equivalent in that day of town-meetings) scrupulously kept by Col. Isaac Lee, and is touching, as well as interesting. The work progressed most rapidly after haying and harvesting were over "if the season permitted;" for the beams and timbers were brought to the site months before building was commenced. In another year the



INTERIOR OF FIRST MEETING HOUSE

structure was erected and roofed, and the floor laid,— a considerably larger building than was at first planned, because the timbers brought in had been cut longer than the directions required; and the windows and doors were placed, and the frames painted in the fall of 1756.

“The first meeting-house was very plain, being about 80 feet by 64 feet in size, with steep roof, without bell, belfry, or cupola. It resembled in size and shape, except for its doors and windows, a large barn. The “Sabba-day house” was probably about sixteen feet square, with small windows on three sides, and a chimney built of stone, or perhaps of brick, on the outside, with a large fireplace.”

Around the meeting-house was a grove of trees, chiefly oak, hickory and maple, which had been saved when the forest was cut off; and in front of it was a parade ground, where the men of the community held their military drill. Owners of property in the neighborhood “deeded to the town of Farmington for highways” broad strips of land leading to the meeting-house from three directions, and thus the streets that we know as Smalley, Elm, and North Stanley, were laid out. Fairview Cemetery was also set aside at this time, and members of the New Britain Society who died, were from 1756 laid to rest here.

It took longer to choose a minister for the new society than to build the church. Some were called who decided not to come; some were called to preach “on probation,” who were not called to come. The New Britain fathers seem to have been both cautious and honest to a fault, for they wanted their candidates to preach often, and even to try living among them, before they decided; and in their turn were scrupulous to set down in detail the amount, the material, and the dates, of payment.

The minister who finally settled in New Britain was the Rev. John Smalley, a man of sound learning, eloquence, and great influence in the Society. When Mr. Smalley came to the New Britain church in 1756 he was a young man, only two years out of Yale College, and fresh from his theological studies. He became a leader of progressive thought among the clergymen of the colony, and a writer and speaker of great reputation.

In appearance he is remembered as having been tall and angu-

lar, always scrupulously dressed in black knee-breeches, close-fitting coat, cocked hat, and very large shoe-buckles. His voice was powerful rather than pleasant, and his preaching manner was vigorous and convincing. He remained pastor of the church for more than fifty years.

In the year 1708 the Society of the First Church in New Britain celebrated its one hundred and fiftieth anniversary, by placing on Smalley Park a large boulder, with a tablet bearing an inscription which commemorates the first church edifice, and the ministry of Dr. Smalley.

III
New Britain
in the
Eighteenth Century

Chapter IX

Eighteenth Century Houses in New Britain

WE need not go further back than the middle of the eighteenth century to study primitive conditions in New Britain, for though there had been a few farms and homesteads here for many years, they had been reckoned as belonging either to Farmington or to Kensington, and had no community spirit. But when the inhabitants of the district united in asking the General Court to create a parish or "society" for them, they became a village, with a definite aim for improving their highways, and for gaining the conveniences of village life.

It will help us to appreciate the privations which the pioneers endured for a score or more of years, if we remind ourselves that the grandfathers and great-grandfathers of these people had come from a highly civilized land, where they were in comfortable circumstances; and that they had striven to rebuild that civilization in their new country, as far as the conditions allowed. Then, those who moved across the mountain to Great Swamp, took with them a standard of civilization and manners. We can imagine them laboring to make their homes as convenient and comfortable as those they had left, in Farmington or Hartford. Perhaps, when they returned from journeys to Farmington on Sundays or on voting-days, or at Thanksgiving, they carried home with them a piece of furniture or a few dishes, or a packet of flower-seeds, from their old abode.

It is doubtful whether there were more than fifty houses, or three hundred persons, in the New Britain Society when it was set off from Kensington. In the neighborhood of Main Street there were four houses, all farm houses, as were nearly all the dwellings of the district.

The houses nearly all seem to have been built after one general pattern, whose two most striking features were the long rear roof,

and the big central chimney. The roof gave character to the shape of the house, from the outside; the chimney regulated its plan, within.

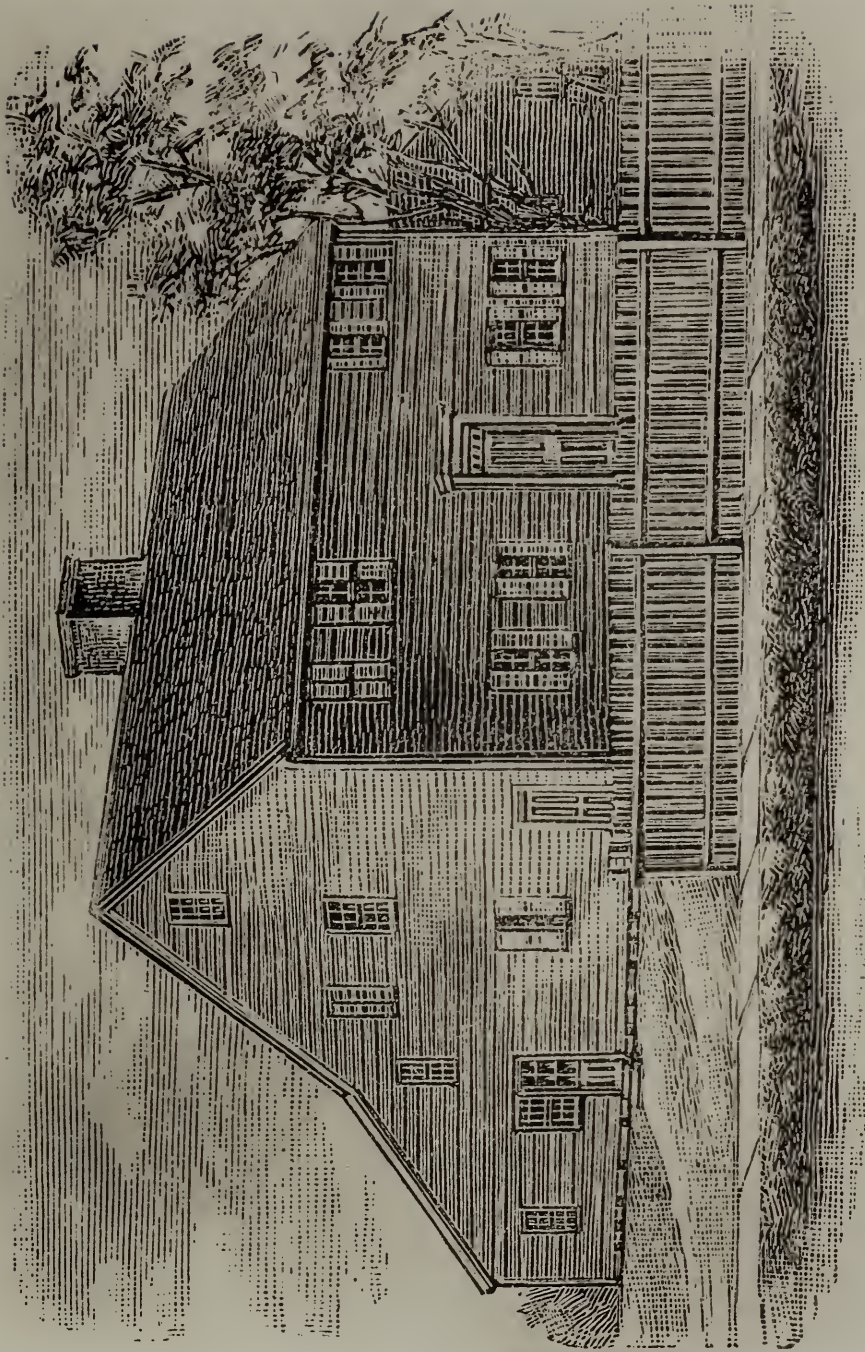
About the chimney, all the rooms were grouped; in front, was a small entrance hall and staircase, on each side a large family room, and behind, a long kitchen, with a small bedroom at either end. From the chimney came the warmth of the whole house, for there was no stove, either in the kitchen or elsewhere. Fire-places gave the only heat; wood was the only fuel.

The kitchen fire-place, particularly, was a huge affair; in it, and in the big oven at one side of it, the family cooking was done. The great oven, which was, like the fire-place, a part of the chimney, was heated once or twice weekly, and into it, after the coals were drawn out, was set the weekly baking; — puddings and pies, besides two or three kinds of bread. These were slowly baked, by the accumulated heat of the stones and bricks. Imagination bids us pause here, to think of the good things which were pulled from that hole in the chimney!

The second story of the house was like the first, except for the kitchen chamber. This was a long room, over the kitchen and under the long rear roof, which, descending to its floor, made its ends triangular. Though dimly lighted, and not particularly cozy, it was a place good enough for a sleeping-room for the hardy boys of the family. On calm summer evenings they could hear the sound of the Farmington curfew bell stealing in at the window; when it rained, the patter of the rain-drops sounded but a few inches above their heads; and in wintry nights the snow often sifted in through the cracks.

In the garret, under the ridge of the roof, stood the loom, on which was woven much, if not all, of the clothing worn by the family. Not every farmhouse, however, could boast a loom; but there was always a spinning-wheel, which stood in the garret when not in use, along with the candle-moulds, and other utensils only occasionally called for.

The stairway connecting the garret with the kitchen-chamber was built close to the chimney. That which connected the kitchen-chamber with the main floor of the house, descended at one end of



HOUSE OF COL. ISAAC LEE

STOOD on North Main Street; lived in by three generations of Lees. Here Col. Lee as magistrate is said to have tried cases of misdemeanor.

the room into the kitchen; and directly beneath it, were the stairs into the cellar.

The amazing thing in the cellar was the size of the great stone chimney, which of course occupied the center. There was room, however, for bins of apples and winter vegetables, and for barrels of salted pork and beef, and of cider.

Attached to the rear of the house was a small shed or wash-room, and beyond that a woodhouse. In the wood-house was piled the family supply of wood, for the numerous fire-places. One of the "chores" of the smaller boys, was to keep the wood-boxes filled.

The windows were small. In earliest colonial times, the panes were diamond-shaped and set in lead; but by the middle of the eighteenth century most houses had windows with double sashes, like ours; though, unlike ours, they had no weights to keep them in place when opened. There were no outside blinds. As a rule, the outside of the house was left unpainted, or if paint was used, the back was given a cheaper coat of red, whatever the color of the rest of the house.

The farmer's pride was his barn, with its wide doorways, its lofty mows, and its ample stalls for the oxen, cows, and horses; its broad floor, big enough for a gathering of the whole village in harvest time; and its adjacent tool-house and wagon-sheds.

There was a well with a tall well-sweep to supply the family's need of water; but the cattle had to be driven to a brook or spring near by, for their drinking. Rain water, for the washing, was caught in wooden gutters along the roof, and fell into hogsheads near the kitchen door.

Gardens, in the sense of spaces assigned to picturesque groupings of flowers and shrubs, had no great popularity in the New Britain of the earliest days. But there was always a fertile spot, near the house, fenced off from marauding chickens, where were grown the green vegetables for summer use; and bordering the path down the middle of this garden, were the flowers, and a few roots of dill, fennel, or caraway, for "meeting-seed."

The most imposing of the houses built in this prevailing style was, doubtless, the house known as the Skinner House. It was

built by Deacon Josiah Lee; and formerly stood at the southwest corner of East and Smalley streets, but was removed some years ago.

A few examples of the middle-chimneyed house may still be found in New Britain, notably that of Colonel Lee, near the north end of Main Street. The old house on the Berlin road, which used to be called the Thomas Hart house, is also of this type. Some of the houses were divided, when the elder son married, the older folks moving into the rooms at one side of the chimney, while the young people took possession of the corresponding rooms on the other side. A few, like Colonel Lee, and Deacon Elijah Hart of Kensington street, were able to build additions to the house, as large as the original, for their young folks.

Near the Thomas Hart corner may still be seen an old house which is an exception to the usual plan of the houses built in the earliest years of New Britain. It was built by the Reverend Samuel Clark, about 1760 and is of the type commonly called Colonial. It is of brick, and has two chimneys, one in either end wall. There is a broad hall through the center of the house, with wide doors at front and back, and a broad stair-case. The floors are well made, and the windows are provided with blinds. At the time of its building, it must have been the wonder of the community.

Chapter X

Everyday Life in New Britain

STRANGE though it seems to us now, farming was the chief business of the inhabitants of New Britain in its early days. Other trades there were, but only those that answered the needs of the settlement, and those who practiced these trades were also farmers. Even the minister had his farm.

Nobody was idle, in the early days of New Britain. The people were self-supporting in a more literal sense than we are today; for not only did they earn their living,— they also made it. On the farms were grown all the vegetables and grain used by the family; on the farm were raised the beef, lamb and pork for the family's meat supply; and on the farm were the sheep sheared for the woolen clothing of the family. Flax, even, was cultivated, beaten and spun, and woven into linen cloth.

The farmer's work was far more laborious than it is today. He did not ride, as he mowed his grass, or raked and turned his hay; all had to be done with scythe, rake, and fork. His grain he had to cultivate by the hoe. He had no whirring saw, motor-driven, to cut the wood which fed his yawning fireplaces through the winter, but only axe, and buck-saw, wielded by strong arms. His only help from machinery was the saw-mill, where he took his timber, and the grist-mill, which ground his grain.

His chief crops were oats, rye, and corn. Potatoes were doubtless coming into use when New Britain farmers first planted their fields, but in the early days they had no place of importance in the family diet. A Farmington historian doubts whether the earliest settlers of that town ever saw a potato! Its place in the meal was supplied by hominy or Indian meal, which was eaten hot for dinner, and fried for breakfast, and — very likely — with milk, as porridge for supper.

No less difficult and important than the farmer's work, were the industries carried on, some continuously and others periodically,

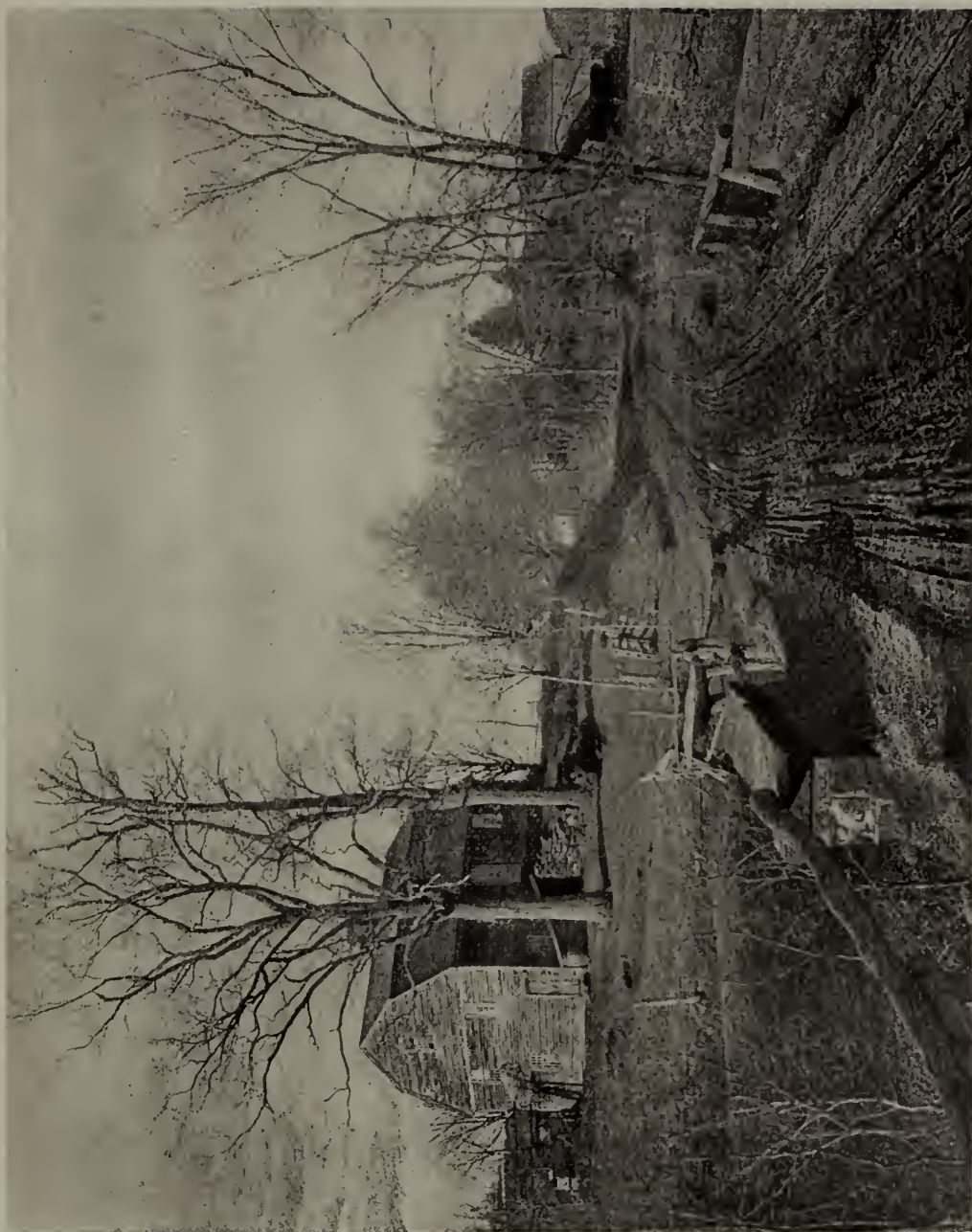
by the women. They spun, wove, bleached, dyed, and knit; they made butter and cheese, candles and soap, clothes and carpets. The weekly washing, at which the small boys of the family assisted, by carrying water and feeding fires, the semi-weekly bakings, at which the small girls assisted, were no light part of the house-keeper's toil.

When we stop to think that in 1750 there were no bath-rooms nor running water, no stoves nor lamps nor matches, we realize how great was the mere task of keeping the house going. If the fire went out, there was a job for flint and steel and tinder; or more often someone ran to the nearest neighbor's "to borrow fire," that is, to bring home a few live coals on a shovel. Likewise, if the yeast saved for the baking from the last time, got chilled or overturned, somebody must borrow from a more careful housewife. These accidents were usually indicative of lack of thrift, however; and as New Britain always had a reputation for thriftiness, one must not suppose they were everyday occurrences.

In most households there were large families of sons and daughters. The boys worked with their fathers in the fields; the girls, until they married, with their mothers in the house. If boys or girls could be spared from home, especially if they had learned to excel in some kind of work, they often "hired out" to help a neighbor, thus earning a little money for themselves.

Boys who were not needed at home, were sometimes apprenticed to one of the village craftsmen, to learn a trade. In such case a boy gave his master his time until he was of age, and received in return his board and clothing, and instruction in his trade. Apprenticeship was the eighteenth century technical school. Between the apprentice and his master's family there often grew up an affection almost like that between parents and son. Elihu Burritt was in his boyhood an apprentice to Mr. Samuel Booth. When Mr. Booth's wife died, Mr. Burritt spoke at her funeral, giving most touching tribute to her as his foster mother.

A few of the wealthier families had two or three slaves, as extracts from their wills show, who acted as household servants. But slavery was not common, and other foreign help, either in the house or out, was unknown.



A STANLEY HOMESTEAD — STANLEY QUARTER

BUILT by Noah Stanley, 2nd, in Stanley Quarter, for his son, south of his own residence. It stands north-west of the New Normal School.

It seems as though the life of the earliest inhabitants must have been one of all work and no play. True, their amusements were simple, and for the most part connected with some task calling for many hands, but they made the most of such occasions. Raising the frame of a new house or barn, or moving a building, was made a festivity, at which the able-bodied men lent their strength, the children ran errands for them, and the women and girls served a picnic meal. There were huskings, and quiltings, followed by supper-parties. There were school exhibitions, and neighborhood spelling-matches, and singing-schools.

At first the people all dressed very plainly, in homespun of dark colors. But by the time of the Revolution, Farmington had become a place of such wealth and consequence, that fine materials were imported by the merchants, and silks, and broadcloths began to be worn in New Britain. Styles could not have changed very rapidly, for we read of people willing their best bonnets and beaver hats to their heirs. It was said of one of the deacons of the New Britain church that "his best long boots lasted him seven years, and his best surtout coat, twenty years."

To the grown-up members of the family, the great blessing of the Puritan household was Sunday. Possibly to the young folks the day seemed a little long, with its two lengthy church services, and its extreme quiet. The observance of the day began with sunset on Saturday, and ended with Sunday's sunset. Of the deacon just mentioned, it was said: "His business was all laid aside by four o'clock Saturday, by himself, his workmen and servants; his cows were milked, his face shaved, his long boots brushed, before sunset."

The work for the Sabbath was prepared, as far as possible, the day before; and any work done on Sunday was a task of necessity, or of mercy. There was only an hour's intermission between the two church services, so most families took a cold luncheon to church with them. After the services, there were a few hours of leisure for everyone. Boys and girls were allowed to play, quietly, fathers and mothers talked as they sat in the parlor, and young people visited one another.

On Sunday evenings, New Britain people could sometimes hear the Farmington curfew bell, if they listened for it. On Saturday

evenings there was no curfew, because it was the Sabbath eve; but on all other evenings it rang, following the sweet old English custom, a farewell to the day.

In the earliest days of New Britain, newspapers were rarely seen, for there was no post-office, and no regular way of delivery. As the settlement grew in size and importance, it was served first by the Farmington, then by the Berlin post-office. There was no delivery, but some one from the settlement made it convenient to visit the stores on mail day, or soon after, every week. When the Connecticut Courant was established, ten years after New Britain was made a separate Society, a few copies were subscribed for, and passed around among the neighbors.

The one book to be found in every house, and sure to be read, as well, was the Bible. It was a not uncommon habit, to read the Bible through once every year. The culture and the high thinking to be gained from that, were the heritage of our New Britain forefathers, along with other settlers of New England.

But a few other books found their way here, at a very early period in our history. Professor Camp is authority for the statement that there was a book club among the early proprietors, and that books for the most part historical works and biblical commentaries, were purchased by subscription, and passed around among the members.

Chapter XI

Schools and Education

THERE were schools in New Britain, from its very earliest days. When the settlement was cut off from Kensington, the district school system in both parishes was well established. The earliest school-house within the present boundaries of New Britain stood at the southeast corner of the parish, near the corner of Kelsey and East Streets; it was the predecessor of the present Smith school.

As the community increased in population and wealth, school-houses were built in other parts of the parish; and at an early date there were four districts, each with its school-house,— the Northeast, in Stanley Quarter, Northwest, on Osgood Hill, Southeast, where the Smith school now is, and Southwest, in Hart Quarter.

The school-house consisted of a single school-room, with an ante-room or cloak-room, where coats and caps and dinner-pails were hung. Here was stacked the week's supply of wood. The school-room itself was nearly square, lighted on three sides, and heated at first by a fire-place on one side, later by a stove in the middle of the room. It had no black-boards, except possibly a square yard or so of matched boards, painted black, behind the teacher's desk. The seats were plank benches, and for the younger scholars, at least, were without backs. The desks were boards fastened to the walls; they were made of two long planks, extending almost the whole length of the room, the board next the wall being level, the one toward the pupils, sloping. When writing or using slates, the pupils sat with their backs to the room; when reciting, they faced about.

Professor D. N. Camp, in his "History of New Britain," tells us what the school day was like. "In the earlier schools," he says, "the only branches pursued were reading, spelling, writing, and sometimes a little arithmetic. In the ordinary district school there would be a half-dozen or more classes in reading and spelling; and

the usual routine was for the first or oldest class to read around in the Testament, as the first exercise of the morning; then the second class, and so on in order to the lowest or A B C children. When all had read, or at about the middle of the forenoon, there would be a recess, first of the girls and then of the boys, or vice versa. Then the recitations proceeded in inverse order, from the alphabet children to the highest class in spelling, which completed the morning exercises."

"In the afternoon," continues Prof. Camp, "a similar routine was followed, except that the reading-book, filled with extracts from the orations of British statesmen, and excerpts from standard authors, took the place of the Testament in the higher classes. The first class, and sometimes the second, had permission to write. The writing-book consisted of coarse, unruled, foolscap paper, from one sheet to half a quire, folded in the shape of a writing book and covered with stiff brown paper by mothers at home. For ruling lines, each boy had a plummet, formed from running lead in a suitable mould. The pens were made from goose quills, and, with most of the pupils, required frequent mending. In one school, a boy who was very near-sighted was permitted to study a little arithmetic, as he could not see to work his examples in the evening arithmetic school. But this was an exception, as it was supposed that this branch would interfere with pursuit of the common English branches of reading, spelling, and writing."

Of the four earliest school-districts, the Southwest district was the one which contained the center of modern New Britain. It comprised all families living on Main Street, and those west of Main street. Four families lived on Main street at the time when New Britain became an independent "Society," each with children of school age. Of these families, the earliest to settle here was that of Nathan Booth, whose house stood on the west side of Main street at the point where Arch and Walnut streets now join it. His farm probably extended westward to, or beyond, Walnut Hill, and down Arch street. The land where the Grammar School now stands was commonly called by the Booth family "the calves' pasture."

Mr. Booth's nearest neighbor was his brother-in-law, Joshua Mather, whose house stood on Franklin Square, near Park street,

a little west of the present office building of the American Hardware Company. It was in one of the chambers of the Mather house, that manufacturing began, in New Britain, fifty years later.

Mr. Booth's nearest neighbor, northward, was John Judd, whose wife, Mary, was the daughter of the pastor of the Kensington Church, Mr. Burnham, and a woman "of great beauty and accomplishments." Their daughter Mary, who doubtless went to the Southwest district school, became the wife of Colonel Gad Stanley, and the grandmother of New Britain's first mayor. The Judd house was on West Main street, a little west of Washington street.

At the head of Main street, opposite St. Mary's Church, stood, until 1924, the old house which was the home of Colonel Isaac Lee, the man who is said to have named the new parish. He was a farmer, an athlete, and a magistrate, and seems to have been one of the most highly honored men in the community.

The school-house of the Southwest district was at first located on West, or West Main street, on the spot which is now the eastern side of Grove Hill at the corner of West Main street. A new house was erected later, on the open space where Vine street joins West Main. When school-houses more central were established, the building at Vine street was removed to the end of the Black Rock road, where it was used for a short time as a school-house. When it had out-last ed its usefulness as a school building, it was converted into a barn; and it may still be seen, standing on land which belongs to the Jerome Home. The building which took the place of this, was used as a district school until the Lincoln school was built, and has long been called the "Black Rock Mission."

As the population of Main Street increased, districts more central were created, and new schools erected. It is an interesting commentary on the thrift of New Britain's early citizens, that the four central school-houses were built on land that was good for nothing else! The vein of trap rock which runs through the city crops out in ledges here and there. Three of the four central school-houses were built upon these ledges,— the first district (Shipman) at the corner of Stanley and Allen streets; the Ledge School, at the corner of East Main and Elm streets; and the South School, near the site of the present Rockwell and High Schools. The fourth was

located at the corner of West Main and Washington streets, a plot of ground which at that time was often under water, and always sprinkled with rocks.

But, we must remember, the location does not make a school good or bad. Nor does the simplicity of the curriculum mean that the schools were poor. It is, after all, the teachers who make the schools; and there were many good teachers in the early days of New Britain's schools. For a large number of the young men teachers during the winter terms, were New Britain boys who had graduated from Yale; while the teachers for the summer terms, were New Britain girls who had excelled in scholarship. Other villages often had teachers from outside, but New Britain seems seldom to have needed to seek them elsewhere.

The schools of colonial times were paid for in part by "county" aid, in part by a land tax; and half the cost was shared between the Society and the pupils themselves. The cost to the New Britain Society of its share of expenses for the four district schools within its boundaries, must have amounted to a large part of its yearly outlay.

The school visitors were chosen from the most respected citizens, and were conscientious in their duties. The ideal held up for the schools may be seen in the language of the Society's records: "to render the schools most serviceable for the increase of knowledge, religion, and good manners."

The School Visitor went the rounds of the schools at least twice during the winter term and twice during the summer term. Sometimes there were lively contests of scholarship between the pupils of the various districts, with spelling matches, declamation contests and other exercises to determine which district made the best showing.

It may be surprising to some to learn that in its early days New Britain also had a school of post-graduate study. It was small, but we may justly speak of it with some pride.

Those who wished to become ministers, had to study in private, since Yale College had no school of theological study. Such students were accustomed to go for instruction to the older ministers of the colony. The Rev. John Smalley, D. D., pastor of the first

church of New Britain, was one of the ministers whose instruction was greatly valued.

Dr. Smalley's house was on East Street; it stood where the Stanley Memorial Church now stands. Doubtless his pupils, of whom he probably never had more than two or three at a time, boarded with him. We may think of East Street, then, as the home of a school of advanced learning, in the early days of the New Britain Society.

Not all of Dr. Smalley's students actually became ministers. His most distinguished pupil was Oliver Ellsworth, of Windsor. He was a graduate of Princeton, and came to Dr. Smalley to study theology. He later studied law, and rose to the position of Chief Justice of the Supreme Court of the United States. Another pupil of Dr. Smalley's who abandoned theology for the law, was Jeremiah Mason, who became a United States Senator, and one of the most eminent lawyers of the day. John Patterson, a New Britain boy, studied with Dr. Smalley at the same time with Oliver Ellsworth. He afterward became a General in the Revolutionary War.

Among those who clung to theology, and became famous, were Nathaniel Emmons, the author of many theological books, and Ebenezer Porter, who later became president of Andover Theological Seminary.

Chapter XII

Trades and Occupations

THE trades of New Britain in the earliest days were, for the most part, those needed by the farmers, to prepare and develop their products for their own use. Thus, there were smiths and tanners, millers and fullers, who completed the farmers' work.

Mills, always a necessity of a farming community, are dependent on water power. Though New Britain has no large streams, there was plenty of water-power for several flourishing grist mills, besides two or three fulling mills. One of the gristmills was situated at the north end of the settlement, just beyond the line of the parish, on the spot where the Clayton Station now stands. Its power came from a branch of Piper's Brook. It was started by William Smith and his brother, but was long known as Churchill's Mill, from the name of a later owner.

At the south end of the settlement was another mill, doing a larger business, and even exporting its product. This was Deacon Elijah Hart's mill, which stood at the corner of Pond and Mill streets. Deacon Hart's house was the long house which still stands on Kensington road, below Arch street. The mill-dam, now included in Willow Brook Park, is worth a visit, as the site of one of the earliest business efforts of New Britain. Deacon Hart sent his product in carts to New Haven, or Rocky Hill, or Middletown, whence it was shipped to the West Indies. A part at least of the payment was in exchange of goods,—molasses, sugar, and rum, being brought back for consumption in New Britain. We can imagine these being distributed to individual farmers, in turn, in exchange for some part of the grain which they carried to the mill to be ground.

The saw mill was almost as important to a farming community as the grist-mill. One of the early sawmills was that of James Judd, near the meeting-house. Hezekiah Andrews had another sawmill,



HOUSE OF GAD STANLEY, 2ND

NEXT door north of his father, Col. Gad Stanley, who lived on the site of his father's house.

in the western part of the settlement, on Pond River. A few men were in the lumber business, preparing builders' lumber, and shaping staves and shooks which were sent in bundles to the West Indies, and there made into casks and barrels.

Not far from Deacon Hart's grist-mill was a clothier's mill. There was a fulling-mill on Horse Plain near the source of the Quinpiack River. To one of these, or to some smaller fuller's mill, of which there were two or three, was taken the rough cloth spun and woven in farmhouse garrets and kitchens, to be shrunk, evened, and pressed into finished cloth.

There were tanneries in town, also, for most farmers of the eighteenth century used hides from their own cattle, for the shoes of the family, and for their harnesses. One of these was in Stanley Quarter, and a later one was on Main Street, on the low swampy ground behind the present site of the Center Church.

Of all the trades, none was more respected than the blacksmith's. Many things besides horse-shoes were made in New Britain's first blacksmith shops, and the owners showed an enterprise which was in effect the beginning of manufacture in New Britain. One of the first blacksmith shops in the settlement was on the Stanley Quarter road, and was owned by Thomas Richards. Here many boys of the parish learned their trade. Further south, Ladwick Hotchkiss had a shop on East Street; and at the southern extremity, near the point where it joins Christian Lane, was the shop of Adonijah Lewis. At the time of the beginning of the Revolutionary War, John Judd, who lived on West Main street, had a blacksmith shop opposite his house; and James North built his shop near it. All these men were men of intelligence, skilled workmen, and honored citizens.

James North, one of the number, developed a skill and business ability which brought him honor at home and in other towns as well. His house stood on the east side of Main street, opposite the end of Myrtle street; and he had a blacksmith shop opposite. Mr. North married Rhoda, a daughter of John Judd of West Main Street, another blacksmith.

We have no evidence that, as a workman, Mr. North was more skillful than either John Richards of Stanley Quarter, or Mr.

Hotchkiss of East street, or than any one of the half dozen smiths scattered through the parish. We may be sure, however, that he did an extensive business and regarded it in a business-like way. His account-books were preserved for many years, and the list recorded there of articles manufactured by him is long and varied.

Here it is, reading like a hardware catalogue:

Augurs	Chest-locks	Grips
Brads	Cranks	Hoes
Bridle-bits	Chisels	Hinges
Bails	Crowbars	Knives
Compasses	Bush-scythes	Keys
Pitch-forks	Ramrods	
Shaves	Spades	
Spikes	Staples	
Shovels	Sleigh-irons	
Tongs	Wedges	

It is plain that his work must have been both delicate and various. We are told of him also, that he wrote a fair hand, and was treasurer and clerk of the school and church societies; and that he held the highest respect of his fellow citizens.

A little story about Mr. North illustrates his enterprising temper. We may call to mind that the houses of that time were heated by fireplaces, and that the shovel and tongs occupied a place of honor at the chimney-side. Now, Mr. North was a blacksmith, not a brass-moulder. He could make serviceable shovels and tongs; but he did not know how to make the brass knobs which adorned the tops, and which caught the firelight so brightly from the stand at the jamb of the fire-place. He was determined to add that craft to his own. So he sent his son James to Massachusetts, to learn the trade of brass-moulding, and persuaded the fathers of two other boys, Joseph Shipman and Joseph Booth, to send their boys also. His good sense and foresight were rewarded, for upon the return of the boys, they began to manufacture, on a larger scale than had been possible before, articles in the list from James North's book. Thus, the first manufacturing done in New Britain, had its beginning in the blacksmith shops of the eighteenth century.

Chapter XIII

Streets and Taverns

TRAVEL in this part of New England, in the middle of the eighteenth century, was chiefly on horse-back. The roads were very rough, and, except for the ox-carts on the farms, wheeled vehicles were little used. The main roads leading from one village to another had some general name, for convenience' sake; but the streets were not named, though the neighborhoods, or "Quarters," in different parts of the town, were called by the name of the most extensive property-holders. When everybody knew everybody else, there was no need to number houses, or even to name streets.

Let us exert our historical imaginations, for a few minutes, and picture the village as it was visited by a kinsman of one of the pioneer families, coming over from Farmington to make a few friendly calls, and to do a little business by the way.

He would have had a choice of routes. He might enter the parish by the old road on the western edge, a through road from Farmington to Kensington and Meriden; possibly the road over Osgood Hill was by the middle of the eighteenth century sufficiently worn to permit travel on horse-back; but the most favored road would have been that along which the earliest pioneers had settled, that through Stanley Quarter.

Let us suppose our traveller arrives, on horse-back, by the Stanley Quarter road. He finds there a populous and prosperous little settlement. Farmhouses string along the road, and the farms stretch away in both directions. He passes a school-house and comes to Richards' blacksmith shop. Here he greets two or three farmers, who are talking by the door while waiting their turn. A bit further along, he stops to quench his thirst at Deacon Noah Stanley's tavern, and to swap Farmington for New Britain news with the Deacon, who is eager for the latest information about Farmington to pass on to his evening visitors. At Smalley Park, he passes the parade-ground, presided over by the new meeting

house, a solemn barn-like structure. He hears from the valley west of the church, the rasp of the busy saw in Judd's saw-mill.

Next as he rides along East street, he passes the minister's house, and very likely sees Dr. Smalley himself working about the place with one of his young men,— Oliver Ellsworth of Windsor. The houses are closer together along here; it begins to look like a village. Ladwick Hotchkiss has a reputation for good smith-work. He has his horse shod there, and looks in, while waiting, at a tiny store in the front room of a house. He undoubtedly finds it small, in comparison with the well-stocked shelves in two or three Farmington stores where New Britain people go for serious buying.

Landlord Smith's tavern is near by, and so he gets his dinner there. Afterward he pays his call upon Major Patterson, who is about to start off to join his regiment for the French and Indian war. He further talks with Josiah Lee, who points out the exact site of the new house he is about to build, a very good house, for Mr. Lee is a man of substance. Mr. Lee explains also, how the East street, or road, connects New Britain with Hartford, by running past Churchill's Mill, and then through Newington. He also points out the thickly settled section to the south, as evidence that the New Britain Society is prospering.

Saying good-bye to Mr. Lee, and promising to deliver his greetings to friends in Farmington, our visitor turns his horse westward, along East Main street. Having promised to look up the Judds, he turns south at the end of the road, and trots down to the swampy, poor ground, where Judd and Mather, and Booth have built, within sight of one another. His horse drinks from Piper's Brook where the road crosses it, at the corner of the West road. Poor land, he notes; but there is an air of snug well-being about the houses, and a pleasantly shaded and sheltered situation for houses, too, if not good farming land. A natural cross-roads, too, between north and south, east and west. It would not be surprising if this became a little center, some day.

After his visit with the Judds, he turns his horse back, in order to try the new path. He thus passes again the head of the long straight road from East street, and goes up past the house of Colonel Lee, one of the foremost men of the Society, and highly respected

in the colony as well, and so over Osgood Hill, home again.

In the course of his ride, our traveller has passed over half the territory of the new parish, and seen more than half of its houses. If he had had a little longer time, he might have covered the rest of it, in a short ride.

To the south, was a cluster of houses and mills along the Kensington road, called Hart Quarter. Most of the settlers here, and on the road running west, had retained their membership in the Kensington church, for one reason and another; yet they were interested in the growth of the New Britain Society. One other important road there was, on the western edge of the New Britain parish. From a name given to a part of it in Kensington which is still in use, the whole road may be thought of as West Lane. It formerly connected Farmington with Kensington and Meriden, by way of the Blue Hills. On the way from Farmington to New Britain, across Horse Plain, it is identified with the road now called Slater's. Lemuel Hotchkiss had a blacksmith shop there, on "Pond River," where he made nails, smelting ore which he brought from Bristol.

The Plainville road includes, in the part just west of the railroad bridge, a part of this old West Lane; a part, which passed through the New Britain parish between West Main street and the corner of Hart and Lincoln streets, has disappeared under more modern roads; but from that point southward, the old road to Kensington and thence to Meriden, takes the line of the West Lane of the eighteenth century.

There were taverns along this road; the most noteworthy, to students of New Britain history, being the one known as the State House. This, like all the early taverns of the district, was merely an unusually large and well-equipped farmhouse. It was for some years kept by a former school teacher, Elizur Hart. It had a large hall, or ball-room, in the second story, which was frequently used by the young people of all the adjacent parishes, for parties; and seems to have been quite a social and conversational center. The name, "State House," has been the cause of some discussion; but it appears from the records that the State of Connecticut was for a time the owner of the house, holding it in exchange for a loan made to the town from the school fund.

The taverns filled a large and honored place in the social life of the early settlers. Beside the State House, there was a tavern — that of Deacon Stanley, in Stanley Quarter, and another, that of “Landlord Smith” on East street; and there were perhaps others, of smaller reputation. These were the chief meeting places of the men of the locality, where discussions of serious matters took place. Politics, war news, military affairs, were thoroughly aired. Strangers passing through, men returned from business trips and military expeditions, brought their contribution.

The mills and the blacksmith shops were also news centers, on account of their direct contact with the outside world. From all indications, the early settlers of the New Britain Society, even without regular morning newspapers, and lacking swift communication with the events of the hour, managed to keep fairly well informed, and to possess and express some very definite opinions.

IV

The Three Parish Centers

Chapter XIV

The First Parish Center 1750—1820

THE first parish center of New Britain was, as we well know by this time, at the little spot now known as Smalley Park. It was also the geographical center. When the farmers of the section of Great Swamp now called New Britain desired to determine upon a location for their projected church building, they called in the help of an official surveyor, appointed for the purpose by the county court. Stakes were driven into the ground at the central point, a committee of land-holders examined and approved the site, and land for highways leading to the spot, from East, West, and South, was deeded by owners of adjacent property. The parish center, then, did not "jes' grow;" it was created by the parish itself, and the village grew around it.

The first meeting-house, and the Parade Ground which stretched before it, were the setting for the civic as well as the religious life of the parish. The church services every Sunday, the military drills, the elections on parish matters, were all held there. For more than half a century, all matters of public interest to the people of New Britain sooner or later came to discussion either at the church or "Sabba-day house" between sermons, or on the Parade Ground before and after the drills of the "Train-band."

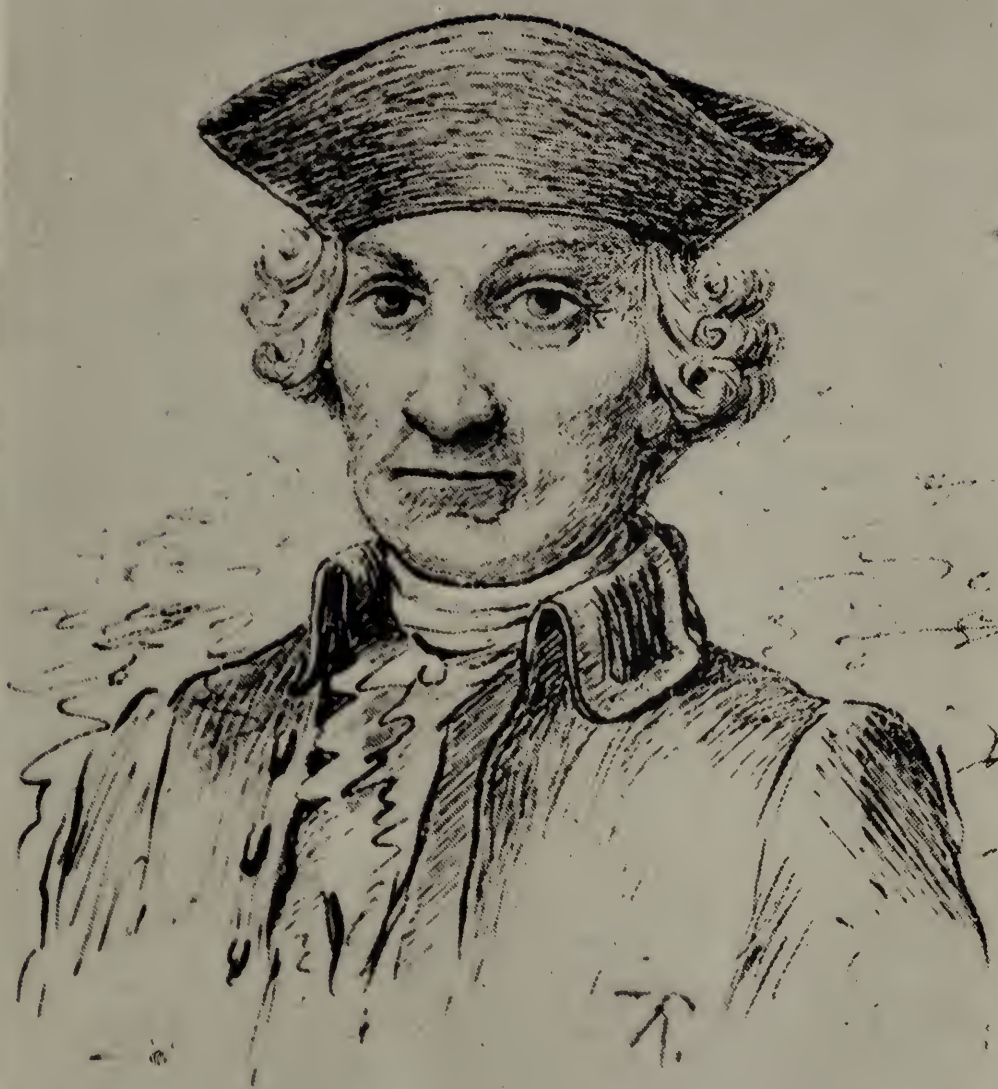
We can imagine that when Major John Patterson set out for the French and Indian War, his departure was talked of there; and that news of the death of Braddock, and Montcalm, and Wolfe, and of the success of the British forces, was there told and retold. When the Stamp Act was passed, and when it was repealed, when the news of Lexington and Bunker Hill came through, when the Declaration of Independence was read and posted, all these matters were debated at Smalley Park. How much the patriotic imagination of New Britain was fired, how far public opinion was formed, and how the ideals which shaped the future of their town found nourishment in that little spot, it would not be hard to conjecture.

Smalley Park, or the Parade Ground, near which the first church stood, was still the center of New Britain when, two years after the close of the Revolutionary War, New Britain ceased to be a parish of Farmington, and united with Worthington and Kensington to form the new town of Berlin. Henceforth, as long as New Britain remained a part of Berlin, town elections were held at the church every third year.

It was still the center of the parish when Col. Isaac Lee and General Selah Hart rode up to Hartford to vote for the ratification of the National Constitution; and it continued to be the center, during the administrations of the first five Presidents. In the days of Washington and Adams, New Britain was learning to rule itself as part of an independent town and member of a free commonwealth. In the days of Jefferson, when the nation was adding to its territory by the purchase of Louisiana, New Britain and her neighbors were building the turnpike road to Berlin and Middletown. Under Madison, while the nation was pre-occupied with misunderstandings with England, the little one-room factories in New Britain, owned and operated by single individuals, won reputation for efficient and honest work from the outside world. These years marked the death of many of the older generation, who had been influential in the early days of the Society.

During the administration of President Monroe, the State of Connecticut adopted a new Constitution, modifying in some respects the laws regarding town and city governments. Smalley Park, or the church, became, in consequence of these changes, less important as a center for all kinds of civic meetings.

When the parish, or society, of New Britain was created, the people were all of one mind, with respect to religion. That is to say, they all went to one church, the Congregational. The parish and the town governments were dependent upon each other. The people taxed themselves for the support of the church, as well as of the schools; and the church, or society as they preferred to call it, had a certain authority over the behavior of all the townspeople. This was all very well as long as there were no citizens whose religious opinions differed from the church. But by the time of Monroe the village had grown; Baptists, Methodists and Episcopalians had



COLONEL ISAAC LEE.

As magistrate, "a terror to evil-doers;" as farmer, renowned for physical strength and endurance. God-father of New Britain Society, 1754; incorporator of Town of Berlin, 1785. Representative in General Court for twenty-four years.

come to Congregational New Britain to live. These people did not wish to be taxed for the support of a church they did not attend. It was clear that a change must be made throughout the state, for other villages and towns were in a like condition. There was need for a change in the constitution to correspond to the development of the state.

The Charter, or constitution, that was set aside, had been granted by King Charles II, but made by the people, as we have seen. The new constitution was also made by the people, or their representatives, assembled in Hartford. The new constitution became effective on the twelfth of October, 1818, by proclamation of Governor Oliver Wolcott.

One of the articles most nearly affecting the people of New Britain, was that which removed from the citizens the obligation to support any one religious faith. No citizen thereafter could be taxed to support any church.

But the little First Church did not for that reason die out. On the contrary, with the growth of the town, and under the leadership of Dr. Smalley and his young colleague in the pastorate of the church, it renewed its vigor, and began to outgrow the old building. Therefore, in 1822, plans were adopted for a new meeting house, situated more conveniently for the majority of the members. The old meeting-house was to be torn down, the old parade-ground abandoned for a more spacious one.

Along with these changes, perhaps assisting them, came a change of men. The older generation, those who had stood under the trees of Smalley Park talking of the Declaration of Independence, who had drilled there in the earliest days of the war, and had gone to fight with the Continental Army, had passed on to their rest, leaving the responsibilities and hopes of the new time to their sons.

All honor to their manful work! And all hail to their sons of the progressive new generation!

New Britain in the French and Indian War

GOVERNMENTS reach out long arms in time of war. In the time of the Seven Years War, 1756-63, England reached out to her colonies to protect her American frontiers. The colonies themselves had no quarrel with France, at the beginning; but, when French troops began to push forward from their line of forts into the frontiers of the English Colonies, the colonists were roused. And when bands of Indians, enlisted by the French, made travel unsafe, the colonists were ready to join with the Mother Country, in a war to determine once for all whether France or England should hold the supremacy in the New World.

Therefore, when General Braddock came over to hold the western frontier, and General Wolfe to push to the north, the General Court of the State called on the towns for men and munitions. New Britain, as part of the town of Farmington, was looked to for her small share.

So, the young men of East street, and Stanley Quarter, and Hart Quarter began to scour their muskets, and older men to make their wills. The "Parade Ground" before the church became a scene of great activity. The local "train-band" increased their drills, recruits marched off to Farmington or Hartford to join other companies, messengers rode up with news of Indian raids or of English skirmishes along the border, or with orders for some one in the parish. However dim had grown their affection for the mother-country, there was no doubt of the colonials' determination to protect the land they lived in from foreign domination or savage raids.

Thus it was that the call to arms came to Major John Patterson, of East street. Major Patterson lived just south of the Piper's Brook crossing. He was a deacon of the church, a man of influence and, as his title indicates, of some military experience. Though fifty years of age, he prepared to go to the war, and like a wise man,



HOUSE OF LYDIA ROOT ANDREWS

made his will. An extract from it will show what manner of man he was. There were probably many citizens of the New Britain parish of like conscientiousness, though not all expressed it in their wills:

"May 11th, 1759; Being called of God to serve my country in the present intended expedition against our northern enemies, the French, calling to mind the danger of martial life, &c., Imprimis to my dear wife, Ruth, I give half my lot I bought of Sergt. Ebenezer Smith, all my right in common and undivided land in Farmington, and all my personal estate, except my negro girl Rose, and also the use of all I shall give my son John, in this will, until he shall arrive at the age of twenty-one years, and half during her life, but she is to give my son John a college education."

Major Patterson did well to make his will; he never came back to sit in the deacon's seat in the church by the Parade Ground. His son John, who was about fifteen years old when his father went to war, received his college education according to his father's directions, and afterwards studied with Dr. Smalley. Following his father's example, he in his turn obeyed the call to serve his country in time of war; and became a General in the War of the Revolution.

Another New Britain man, who, like his neighbor, Major Patterson, was a military man, was Captain Stephen Lee, whose house stood on the northwest corner of East and Smalley streets. He had served in the Farmington Train Band, but was too old to go to the French and Indian War. His son Josiah went, however, and an extract from Captain Lee's will, made when the troubles first began, shows how he provided for his son's family:

"I, Stephen Lee, for parental love of my son, Josiah, and his wife Hannah, do give them the north half of my dwelling-house, and also half of my barn, garden and orchard, with use of cellar; it is understood that my son is bound on the present expedition against our northern enemies, the French; if any accident befall him that he return no more, his wife is to have free liberty to use, occupy, and enjoy the premises as above, so long as she remains his widow."

Josiah Lee did return from the war; and built near his father a fine house, which came to be known, in later years, as the Skinner

House. His daughter Elizabeth married that son of Major Patterson, who received a college education, by the will of his father.

When the war came to an end, with the fortifications along the St. Lawrence and the lakes under British rule, and with a new king on the throne, of whom the colonies were hearing good reports, there seemed to be reason to hope for a peaceful and prosperous future.

But they did not take into consideration one important fact,—that England, after the war, was in debt, and that nations pay their debts by taxing their people.

Two years after the close of the French and Indian war, when New Britain, along with other young communities, was just beginning to develop a little prosperity, and to turn the taxes toward improving their village advantages, the English Parliament passed the Stamp Act.

New Britain in the Revolution

THE great change of public sentiment that came about in the colonies, during the twenty years which passed between General Braddock's campaign against the French and Indians, in 1755, and the battle of Lexington, in 1775, was symbolized by the change in the uniforms of the Colonial soldiers, from the King's scarlet, to homespun. The change was gradual, not sudden, and was by no means unanimous, at first.

In the neighborly meetings of New Britain farmers, millers, and smiths, which took place informally as they went about their business; and at debates, more like public meetings, gathered in stiff and earnest groups in some tavern to discuss some bit of news in all its bearings; and finally on the Parade Ground between services and at drill times, the discussions were warm, and indignation ran high. We can imagine there was some wavering of opinion, and some timidity about the wisdom of coming out against a settled government, in spite of all its sins. We know that the polite titles of "Loyalist" and "Patriot" were less often and less loudly heard, than the plain-spoken, if disrespectful names, "Tory" on the one hand, and "Rebel" or "Yankee" on the other.

We know, at any rate, from the records, that as early as 1774 the feelings of the majority of Farmington citizens, including the New Britain parish, were strongly with the Patriots. There was a "Committee of Correspondence," from that year, which received news from the other colonies, and sent out to them letters of encouragement, and assurances of support. We find, among the names of this committee, some surnames still familiar in New Britain,—such as Smith, Judd, Root, Hart, and Stanley. At the same time, a large committee from all the parishes of Farmington, was appointed to receive subscriptions of supplies for the troops about Boston, and "to transport the same." Think what labor those contributions involved!

There were Connecticut men at Bunker Hill, and at the siege of Boston. But all Connecticut was roused when, in the summer of 1776, her own coast was threatened by the troops and ships of the British forces. Connecticut men went in groups to enlist in the Continental Army; and Connecticut militia companies recruited new men, and made arrangements for their training and equipment. When Washington tried to prevent the British from landing, by the line of redoubts across the western end of Long Island, he had an army of less than twenty thousand men in all; and more than twelve thousand of these were of the Connecticut militia. The parishes of New Britain and Kensington furnished several officers, among whom were Col. Selah Hart, Capt. Gad Stanley, Lieut. Lemuel Hotchkiss, and others. Gad Stanley went, with a whole company from New Britain at his back.

After Lexington and Bunker Hill, there might have been a chance of compromise. But when the Declaration of Independence was proclaimed, and posted in the larger towns for people to read for themselves, a new hope dawned for the colonies; and New Britain fathers, who had waited, and held their sons back, now bent their efforts to make the Continental arms successful. We are told that in the early part of the war, nearly every able-bodied man in the town of Farmington was with the Continental forces.

And what of the women? Some few stories have come down to our day; but what untold tales of labor and courage and grief and sacrifice, to say nothing of ingenuities in ways of serving their country, are buried with the girls and women of the Revolutionary period!

It is not within the scope of a short story of New Britain to give all the records of Revolutionary soldiers; nor even to name them all. A few typical examples will show the temper of the people. We must read between the lines to learn what self-denying love of country prompted them.

The muster-roll of New Britain shows the names of Judds and Stanleys, Lees, Norths, and Booths, Harts, Smiths and Andrewses, — not one from a house, but commonly two or three, or more. Ebenezer Steele, who lived on Horse Plain near Osgood Hill, went to the war, along with his three sons. Phineas Judd, who lived on



MAJOR-GENERAL JOHN PATERSON.

SON of Major Paterson, of East Street. Graduated from Yale, and studied with Dr. Smalley. Was with Washington's Army at the battles of Trenton and Princeton. Member of court which tried Major André. Resident of Lenox, Mass., during latter part of his life.

South Stanley street, was an old man, and had no sons; but when his nephew was killed, he volunteered, and went, to take the boy's place. Moses Andrews, who lived near Black Rock, on West Main street, had seven grown sons. Six of them went to the war, and their mother, Lydia Root Andrews, fitted them all out, from socks to suits, by her own industry. Whether she raised the sheep, and spun and wove the wool, as well as knitted and sewed, is not told in detail; but, since those accomplishments were part of every New Britain girl's education in those days, it is more than likely that she at least superintended the whole process. Her eldest son was killed; the next year she sent her youngest to take his place, a lad of sixteen.

John Patterson, whose father had lost his life in the French and Indian War, had moved away from East Street to Massachusetts, before the war of the Revolution. He joined the patriot army, and became a Brigadier-General. He took part in one of the dramatic scenes of the conflict, serving as one of the judges in the trial by Court-martial of that other John, so near him in age, and in gallantry, Major John André.

Chapter XVII

Loyalists and Patriots

LOYALISTS, or Tories, were few in New Britain, during the war of the Revolution. Indeed only one man is on record as having put his Loyalist belief into words, in public, at this time; and even he became reconciled to being American rather than British. Strangely this was one of the most influential men of the parish, its minister, Dr. Smalley. In all other matters, Dr. Smalley had found respectful acquiescence in his teachings for the eighteen years he had been the minister of the New Britain Society; but the idea of submission to government by command, not even he could make right.

The story of the clash of wills between Dr. Smalley and the men of the church, is so well told by Mr. Andrews, in his history of the First Church, that we can do no better than to quote a part of it.

"When the war of the Revolution broke out, Mr. Smalley's people discovered that his sympathies were inclined to the side of royalty. An incident has come down, not only by tradition, but in writing, to illustrate the state of feeling.

"Two British vessels appeared off New London, and an express was sent to alarm the people of the colony. It arrived in New Britain on the Sabbath, just before the close of the afternoon service. As soon as the blessing was pronounced, Captain Gad Stanley gave notice to his company to appear on the parade (Smalley Park), the next morning; and when Mr. Smalley passed out at the front door, from the pulpit, many of his people had gathered there in great excitement, when he (imprudently) made the following remark: "What! Will you fight your King?" The people were offended, and some few here, and more in the Society of Farmington, threatened violence; but Colonel Lee, who had unbounded influence, came to the rescue of both parties, and the tempest was hushed and passed off without any serious outbreak."

There was another Loyalist clergyman in New Britain during the war, but he was not a resident. He was an Episcopal clergyman from Fairfield, Connecticut, and he was virtually a prisoner here, in the home of Colonel Lee. Mr. Shepard's History of St. Mark's Church tells the story, and gives the name of the prisoner as Rev. John Sayre, of Fairfield. After giving the period of his confinement as seven months, Mr. Shepard quotes the words of Mr. Sayre himself:

"I was at length banished (upon the false and malicious pretense of my being an enemy to the good of my country), to a place called New Britain, in Farmington, about 80 or 70 miles from Fairfield, where I was entirely unknown, except to one poor man, the inhabitants differing from me both in religion and political principles. However, the family in which I lived showed me such marks of kindness as they could, and I was treated with civility by the neighbors."

It is a curious coincidence, called to our attention by Mr. Shepard, in his history of St. Mark's parish, that a grandson of Mr. Sayre's host, Col. Lee, gave the land for the first Episcopal church, which stood on East Main street. Mr. Sayre, in spite of his condescending attitude, seems to have impressed himself upon the family which harbored him.

Since the little parish of New Britain does not offer much contemporary evidence, in writing, of the bitterness of feeling during the war of the Revolution, we can judge of its extent in this section, from reading a few extracts of the diary of a British officer, who was one of a group imprisoned, or interned, in Hartford, in the year 1776. Major French, seems, for a time, to have had the liberty of the town, on parole.

(Extracts from the diary of Major French.)

On Tuesday, January 16, 1776, he writes:

"An account came of the defeat of General Montgomery at Quebec between the hours of four and six in the morning in which he was killed, and his second in command (Arnold) wounded, etc. This day we all, viz., Captain McKay, Messrs. Rotton and McDermott and I, went, according to prior agreement, to dine with Governor Skene. Captain McKay drove us, and, as is customary,

hallooed a good deal to the horses, which we did not conceive could give umbrage or have any bad consequences.

"In the evening, whilst we were playing at whist for our amusement, we were informed that upwards of twenty men were assembled at a house immediately opposite to us, who were determined to attack us because, they said, we were come there to make merry and rejoice at their misfortune at Quebec. We retired to an upper room determined to defend ourselves to the last. We sent a negro man to the house to find out what was doing, who soon returned and told us that the Captain of the Militia was endeavoring to persuade them to desist, and that he believed he would succeed. In a short time the woman of the house (who was greatly frightened) went out, and on her return told us that they had dispersed."

Under date of May 9, 1776, Major French gives us a glimpse of the second inauguration of Governor Trumbull (Brother Jonathan): "He marched in great state, escorted by his guards, in scarlet turned up with black, to the State House."

On May 20th, however, the Major was threatened with jail: "The meeting and schoolhouse bells were rung before 5 o'clock this morning by one Watson, Printer (of the Courant), and one Tucker, in order to raise a mob to send us all to jail; they assembled accordingly, and, forming a committee of their own, sent them to the Town Committee, then sitting for that purpose, but were pacified by these last."

He was in jail the first of September, when news came of the battle of Long Island, and notes in his diary the reactions upon his own prospects:

"Sept. 3; A young lad who was working at some picketing which was putting round the gaol for fear we should escape, said, in course of talking of the defeat of the Provincials on Long Island, that he did not know but the Regulars might soon be in possession of Hartford, but he was pretty sure we should not live to see it. Upon asking him why he thot so, as we were all in good health, he answered that he was "sartin sure" the people would put us all to death, as he had heard some of them declare they would."

On November 17, Major French did escape. The Courant of the next morning had the following advertisement, signed by Eze-

kiel Williams, Sheriff: "Whereas Major Christopher French escaped from the gaol last night to join the British Army—whoever shall take him up and return him to Hartford gaol, shall be entitled to a premium of ten dollars."

Major French was re-arrested, and returned to jail. A week or more later, in company with others, he made a second attempt to escape, and this time with success. He was assisted by Rev. Roger Viets, of Simsbury, a loyalist clergyman. But Mr. Viets was arrested, tried, convicted, and sentenced to pay a fine of one hundred dollars, and to suffer a year's imprisonment. So great was the bitterness of the time.

But gradually the bitterness faded out. The war over, many loyalists removed to Nova Scotia, in order to remain under the rule of England. The soldiers came home from the army, to earn their livings, their return as simple as their going to war had been brave. Colonel Gad Stanley returned to his farm in Stanley Quarter, as did General Selah Hart to his farm in Kensington; Captain Lemuel Hotchkiss built a forge and foundry on Horse Plain, and went to making nails and window-springs. Mills began to hum harder than ever, and new forges to clatter.

New Britain, Kensington and Berlin Form a New Town

IN the first years after the war, many questions of re-adjustment came up before the thirteen new states. Historians have called these years a critical period, because of the grave problems that had to be settled, to enable the states to become good neighbors, and work together for the common advancement.

During this period, Connecticut, in the process of laying out its town boundaries, changed the parish of New Britain, from Farmington, to Berlin. Instead of being one of half a dozen parishes distant from the town center, the New Britain parish united with those of Worthington and Kensington to make an independent town.

The explanation of the change plainly lies in the geographical unity of the three parishes. When the scattered possessions of Farmington were reorganized, it was with a view to the convenience of the inhabitants, as well as to the more efficient government of the outlying settlements. The citizens of the three parishes, loyal though they might be to the Farmington of their fathers, were as anxious to be separated from the town of Farmington, as they had been, years ago, anxious to have church centers and meeting-houses of their own.

The new town was called Berlin, by the State authorities. Town meetings were held in each of the three parishes in rotation. The first meeting was held in June, 1785, in Kensington. At this meeting, a committee was appointed to settle affairs with Farmington, which was giving up much of its public land. Committees were also appointed, to make arrangements with Middletown and Wethersfield, in respect to the transfer of certain lands from those towns to the new one. The first annual town meeting after the separation was finally confirmed, was held in New Britain. Following the common custom of the time, it took place in the Congregational meeting-house, on the Parade Ground,— that is to say, the

church was used for the voting place of the three parishes. It took another generation, and a good deal of heated discussion, to convince some of the stricter and more conservative, that politics and town affairs were one thing, and religion another.

The citizens of the new town travelled from one parish to another by old roads, parts of which are main thoroughfares still, while other parts can no longer be traced. In 1785 the Berlin and Middletown turnpike had not yet been laid out, though in a few years it was a well travelled and comfortable thoroughfare. People for the most part went from New Britain to Worthington by Christian Lane; and to Kensington by the Beech Swamp Road. West Lane connected the three settlements, but was more convenient for those who lived in the western part of town, and in Hart Quarter.

The town of Berlin, of which New Britain was the least important member, sent two delegates to the convention held at Hartford to ratify the National Constitution, in January, 1788. The two were, General Selah Hart, of Kensington, and Colonel Isaac Lee, of New Britain.

In the summer of 1789, General Washington, who had been elected President of the new nation in the previous November, made a tour of the New England states. On his return journey to New York, he stopped for breakfast at Fullar's Tavern, in Worthington.

Of the three parishes, Worthington was slightly the largest, and the most luxurious. In the census of 1800, the population, as officially determined, was as follows: Worthington had 1003; New Britain, 946; Kensington, 764. There was some manufacture of tin utensils in the Worthington parish; New Britain blacksmiths had some reputation for their skill in small articles of hardware. Professor Camp makes some interesting comparisons in his History of New Britain. He notes, among other statistics showing the comparative wealth and importance of the three parishes, that at the time of this same census, New Britain owned fifteen per cent. more of working oxen than either of her neighbors; but that of dairy animals, cows and young cattle, Worthington had sixteen per cent. more, and Kensington thirty-two per cent. more, than New Britain.

In the matter of luxuries, New Britain was even further be-

hind. Worthington boasted sixteen top-carriages, and eighteen open carriages; Kensington had five top-carriages, three open, and one phaeton! What a proud person the owner must have been! New Britain had only four open carriages, and two top-carriages, but,— the story goes,— these were gayly painted with scarlet and blue. Kensington led the town in the possession of watches, with three of gold, and eleven of silver among its men; Worthington counted up twenty-four silver watches, and one of gold. In New Britain, there were no gold watches, and fourteen of silver.

Is it any wonder, with such a balance of importance in favor of Worthington, that the Federal Government should, in 1799, have chosen that parish for the location of the post-office for the town of Berlin? And, again, is it to be wondered at, that the name of the post-office, Berlin, gradually took the place of the old parish name of Worthington?



JOSEPH CLARK HOUSE

BUILT about 1750. Here was New Britain's
first store, 1754. Five generations of Clarks
have lived here.

Chapter XIX

The Second Parish Center 1820—1850

NEW BRITAIN was destined to grow to the westward, from the Parade Ground, and the situation of its first meeting-house. The Stanley street and East street neighborhood remained a farming district; the part of the village to the west and southwest, where the land was poorer and the houses closer together, went into business, and built stores, and started factories.

About the year 1820, New Britain had a religious revival, which was succeeded by an awakening of interest in affairs of this world.

The first store west of East street was built in the same year, on the west side of Main street at the corner of West Main street. The shop of James North, Jr., was near the corner of Commercial street, and another large store was between that and East Main street; the first butcher-shop was opened in the same neighborhood, at about the same time.

In 1821, the Society of the First Church appointed a "Measuring Committee" to determine the exact center of the parish, as a site for the new church. They reported the spot at the corner of Main and East Main streets as the exact center of New Britain's population in that year; and a son of Colonel Isaac Lee gave the ground now belonging to the Burritt school. In 1822, accordingly, the new meeting house, or church, was erected. Some of the stories told of the erection and dedication of that church, by Professor Camp, Deacon Andrews, and Mr. Charles Mitchell, give a lovely picture of the simplicity and kindliness and contentment of the village life of that day. Perhaps we do not wish it back; but surely we wish we might have a little of the old spirit of unity among our various elements in the busy town of this twentieth century!

The timbers were cut on the hills to the north of the village, and shaped at the foot of Dublin Hill. Farmers from all parts of the

parish came with their teams and their tools, and levelled and cleared the ground. The building was erected by a builder from New Haven; but as it neared completion the men of the parish gave their services now and then, making a kind of neighborhood festival of the occasions. The wives and daughters and sweethearts of the workers set forth picnic luncheons under the trees, and the children ran errands.

The new church was worthy of a growing and prosperous community. Above it rose a graceful spire; in the front opened three wide doors; along the sides were two rows of windows, shaded by green blinds. The interior was a good-sized auditorium, which, with a gallery running around three sides, in addition to the pews on the main floor, furnished seats for a large congregation.

Not long after the First Church was finished, two other churches were built, not far away. Near the foot of Dublin Hill, a small building was erected for the Baptists, or Separates, as they were called at first. On East Main street, near the present entrance to Summer street, was the Episcopal Church.

It was not long before there were other public and semi-public buildings in the vicinity. The "Stone Store," as it was long called, was built within two years after the church was finished. Except for a brief interval, the building retained its character of country provision-store for more than half a century, and to the last it remained a dim, low-ceiled, rather mysterious cavern, smelling of lard and molasses and meal, and keeping stored in dark corners and back rooms, hogsheads and boxes black with age, and seemingly never opened.

The new post-office, won at last for the parish of New Britain in 1825, was located in the Stone Store. It was kept by Thomas Lee, and John Francis carried the mail to and from Hartford, twice a week.

The Stone Store at a later period for a short time combined business with education. It was acquired by Mr. Elijah Burritt, a brother of Elihu Burritt; he added to it a dwelling house, and conducted there a boarding and day-school. Mr. Burritt was an astronomer, and author of a "Geography of the Heavens." He built a platform on the roof of the house, from which he and his pupils were accustomed to study the stars.



SECOND EDIFICE OF THE FIRST CHURCH OF CHRIST.
BUILT IN 1822.

About six years after the erection of the new meeting-house, an "Academy" was built, just east of the church. We call its modern equivalent, High School, although the Academy had no fixed educational routine, but merely taught the more "advanced branches," and prepared students for Yale, when there were any who wished to go!

The Academy was the meeting-place for informal religious services, and for parish elections. It was also the scene of lectures, concerts, and meetings of literary societies. There was a flourishing intellectual life in New Britain at this period. The library founded by Dr. Smalley, and carried on for a time after his death, had been discontinued, and the books, chiefly volumes of theological commentary, had been distributed among the proprietors. But a new organization was founded in 1825, which continued, under various names, for a quarter of a century. Meetings were held every fortnight, with debates, speeches, and original literary contributions for the edification and amusement of members. In 1836 the name of "The New Britain Lyceum" was adopted, and the work of the organization was enlarged. Lecture-courses were included in the meetings, and lecturers were invited in from outside. A library was put in general circulation; and the Lyceum joined with similar organizations of the state and nation in conferences and exchanges of plans of work. The lecture courses proved to be the chief contribution of the Lyceum to the life of New Britain.

During this period of the second parish or civic center, five presidents came and went. Small towns like New Britain, and indeed individual states, were well occupied in learning to manage their own affairs. The nation asserted its strength through the Monroe Doctrine, which astonished the world almost before the paint on our new meeting-house was dry. Its weakness, on the other hand, was indicated by the growing dissensions among the states regarding slavery. Twice during the period from 1820 to 1850, the Union of States was with difficulty maintained, for the time being, by compromise. Connecticut had never been, constitutionally speaking, on the side of slavery. New Britain, along with other towns, had long since settled its own small slavery question.

Yet, the edge of the storm-cloud swept over the village; and New Britain felt the mutterings of the thunder.

Chapter XX

An Episode of the Slave Trade

NEW BRITAIN, like many other northern towns, settled for herself the question of slave-holding, long before the law against slavery was passed, in 1848. By the early days of the nineteenth century, the few slaves that were owned, as household servants and farm laborers, had been set free, by the will or gift of their owners.

There were several reasons for this; but we must believe that the chief one was the loyalty of thinking people to the spirit of the Declaration of Independence, which declared that all men are created with certain rights to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness.

During the interval of thirty years, while the parish center remained at Main and East Main street corner, the question of slavery was a continual source of trouble. Many citizens of New Britain joined the movement headed by William Lloyd Garrison, in violent opposition to the principles of slavery, no matter what the difficulties of settling the question. The Abolitionists, of whom there were many in the First Church, aroused fierce agitation throughout the country. Everybody took sides. Some were "Free-soilers," who believed that, while the southern states should be allowed to retain the custom of slave-holding, no new states holding slaves should be admitted to the Union. Others, still, tried not to take sides, and tried to keep political attention fixed upon commercial questions like the tariff, hoping, perhaps, that the problem would settle itself.

In the midst of all the growing excitement over the slavery question, a strange and dramatic episode occurred, which attracted the interest of the whole nation. New Britain had nothing to do with it, but Farmington had; and one of the New Britain roads was the scene of one act.

A ship, named the "Amisted," was on its way from Africa, with a cargo of blacks, who had probably been kidnapped, or bought from their fellow-countrymen, who had taken them in some tribal

war. Out at sea, the negroes turned on their white captors and killed all but two. These they ordered, under pain of death, to steer the ship back to Africa. But the sailors, instead, brought the ship to this country. It was seized off the Connecticut coast, and the negroes were imprisoned. The question then was, were these savages slaves, or free men?

They were defenceless, having no knowledge of the law, or of the language. Yet no less a person undertook to prove their right to freedom, than a former President of the United States, John Quincy Adams. The trial took place in New Haven. Concerning it, Mr. Adams wrote in his diary, "I had been deeply distressed and agitated until the moment when I rose (to speak); and then, my spirit did not sink within me. With grateful heart for aid from above. . . . I spoke for four hours and a half."

That was a long speech; but John Quincy Adams combined a passion for freedom with a knowledge of all the precedents of law. He won his case, and the Court declared the prisoners free. Their situation was almost worse than before. They were free, to go out into the streets of a strange city, filled with unknown people of strange looks and ways; free, but friendless, penniless, shelterless and ignorant of the language. What was to be done with them, or for them?

The people of Farmington made the practical offer to take them, and attempt to educate them. They were, accordingly, sent to Farmington, in March, 1840.

And here comes into the story the New Britain road. The negroes were brought as far as Berlin by the New York, New Haven, and Hartford railroad, which had just been completed. From the Berlin Station, which was at that time south of the bridge over the Mattabesett river, they were taken, in sleighs, by the Mattabesett road and the turnpike, through the western part of New Britain to the Plainville road, and out to the Cook's Tavern Corner, and so to Farmington.

In Farmington they remained for about a year. At the end of that time they were sent back to Africa. But that is not the end of the story; for with them from Farmington went the missionaries who started the Mendi Mission, which has become famous for its valuable and self-sacrificing labors.

The Third Parish Center 1850

THE Parade Ground, now commemorated in Smalley Park, had remained the heart of the New Britain Society for nearly three-quarters of a century. The center at the junction of Main and East Main streets must have been as beautiful as many of the village centers still to be found in New England; but it was outgrown and left behind in less than a generation. The village kept up the direction of its growth, to the south and the west. A slight water-power near Main street where West Main joins it, passing on toward the southeast, was enough of a motive to attract several little manufacturing enterprises, and some stores. As early as 1840, the center of the town began to show some of the characteristics it retains to this day.

There were already a few prosperous-looking residences around the triangular open space at the junction of Main and West Main streets; and a small tavern on the western side of the triangle. Churches around the green helped to give a town-like air to the neighborhood, before 1850.

The Methodists were the pioneers of the center, building a plain little meeting-house of wood, at the south end of the green. The meeting-house which is at present occupied by the Swedish Evangelical Church is the second building on the site, which was in its turn outgrown. Next, one hundred and twenty members of the First Church withdrew to form a Second Congregational Society, and built for themselves a little wooden meeting-house, at the corner of Main and Arch streets. The Baptists next abandoned their first meeting-house at the head of Main Street, and built a more spacious wooden church at the corner of West Main street, facing the park. The Episcopalians were strong enough in numbers to give up their little church on East Main street, for the church so long occupied by them, on West Main street at the northwest cor-



HOUSE OF MOSES AND LYDIA ANDREWS

BUILT about 1748-52, by Joseph Root, brother
of Lydia Root Andrews. From this house six
sons went to the Revolutionary War.

ner of the park. Lastly, the congregation of the First Church erected their new church, of brick with a wooden spire, at the corner of Main and Church streets. With five churches surrounding it, the little triangle could with truth be called the religious center of the community.

A few business blocks, one or two stories high, of wood, were built on the eastern and northern sides of the green. The western side was, for another twenty years, chiefly taken up with private houses. The post-office was moved down from the "Stone Store," that it might be more centrally located; and though for some time it flitted uneasily from one building to another, it never thereafter left the center, until the permanent Government building was erected.

In 1850 a new Town Hall was built, and further accented the dignity of the new center. Its governmental career was brief, and belongs in another story; but the building still stands, opposite Walnut street, and has remained up to 1925, amid all its ups and downs, the home of the Grammar School.

The green, or "Central Park," was not planned. Like Topsy, it grew, and grew without much encouragement. It became public ground very early in the history of the locality; and was used for many different purposes, popular and semi-official. Military drills were held here, before armories for drilling-places were thought of. Auctions of household goods, public whippings by the town sheriff, and athletic contests of various kinds, took place here, and it was a favorite ball-ground for both small boys and big ones. One of the games frequently played here in the fifties was wicket, a game somewhat resembling cricket, except that the ball was bowled over the ground, instead of thrown. The enthusiasm with which it was spoken of, even after forty years, by those who had played it, was proof that there must have been lively scenes at the matches on the park.

V

From Village to City

Beginnings of Manufacture

AT this point in our story of New Britain, we have to inquire into the beginnings of manufacture here. Was it by chance, we wonder, as we read this early story, that New Britain grew into an industrial rather than a commercial town,—making things, rather than buying and selling them? And, how was it that hardware came to be the chief product, instead of flour or shoes or cloth or silverware or anything else?

Was ever a town more poorly situated for growing into a large city? It had no navigable water within ten miles, no water-power great enough to keep a mill-wheel turning all day; no forests or mines, no great plantations or vineyards. Yet, there was an answer to that doubt, in the familiar story of the reply made by an enthusiastic New Britain man, to a skeptical visitor. To the stranger, who asked, "What are the natural advantages of New Britain?" the patriot proudly answered, "The Grace of God, and men like Major North!"

New Britain was settled just as its neighbors were, and with no difference of purpose. At the beginning a self-sustaining, farming community, it lived upon what it raised, with very little money, and not much exchange of commodities. In each of its districts, or "Quarters," was the usual saw-mill and grist-mill, and fulling or clothier's mill; using the power of the three small streams that flowed to northeast, southeast, and west,—Piper's Brook, the northern branch of the Mattabesett, and the Quinipiack. Two tanneries and a wagon-shop, a couple of one-room stores, and a farm-house shoe-shop, helped to keep the town going; and blacksmith shops, in rather more frequency than might be looked for, were the busiest spots in the settlement.

This reads like the description of any New England village, before the Revolutionary War. But the industry and ambition of

New Britain men outgrew the opportunities which the land offered them. They began to make things.

It took some years for them to find out what they could make here, on a scale large enough to pay for giving up farming. They tried various lines of work, some of which they pursued through two or three generations with some success. At least one mill, that of Deacon Elijah Hart and his sons, on the Kensington road, ground grain in quantities, and exported the meal to the West Indies. Along with it, were sent bundles of hoops and barrel staves, which were there knocked into kegs and casks, and filled with rum and molasses for the return trips. Transportation to the sea-ports at New Haven and Middletown was an arduous job, in ox-carts plodding over rough "paths" that were hardly more than trails. At one time, New Britain had quite a reputation for its cheeses, and cider-presses flourished.

The blacksmith shops, however, were unusually numerous, and unusually busy, from the earliest days of New Britain. They turned out the most varied products, as James North's list of the year 1800 shows. They hummed with industry and experiment,— and with talk as well; for the smithies were meeting-places, and questions of public interest and private enterprise were frankly discussed. Some of these discussions are on record, and show the early manufacturers, or blacksmiths, blazing the trail which later organizers were to follow.

It was not long before they hung signs over their smithies proclaiming them to be, not blacksmith shops but "Iron Works" (a name which has clung, in New Britain); nor was it long before they began to specialize, dividing their lines of work, and increasing their skill. They sent their boys away to learn methods in other shops and foundries; they sought improvements in their tools; and combined to send salesmen out with their goods.

An industry which began very early in the Great Swamp settlement, and which for more than half a century flourished increasingly, was the manufacture of household utensils from tin plate. This did not, like the making of hardware, spring from the community itself; nor was its material dug from the near-by mountains. On the contrary, both material and workmen came from



HOUSE OF ISAAC NEWTON LEE

Europe. In 1740, two brothers named Paterson came to Christian Lane, from the north of Ireland. They brought with them a box of sheets of tin; and began the manufacture of household utensils. A little later, one of them moved to Kensington, and started a shop there, taking in half a dozen young men as apprentices, who in turn established their own shops in the three parishes.

The credit for their success must be given to the housewives of New Britain, and other Connecticut towns. It did not take them long to put their old utensils of iron and earthenware up on their highest shelves, and to substitute for them the tin dishes, so light and durable, and so easily cleaned. We can picture the revolutionizing effects upon housekeeping, if we recall a similar experience of later years, when tin, in its turn, was largely replaced by dishes of enameled ware, aluminum, and even of glass.

Students of the early days of New Britain claim that the tin-peddler, who was an institution of rural life from the early part of the nineteenth century almost until the opening of the twentieth, started out, on his first trip, from New Britain. At first he carried his wares in packs or baskets, going on foot from house to house until he had made the rounds of a village. When turnpike roads were built connecting the towns, he carried his stock in a one-horse, open wagon; and regularly added to his tin-ware, the products of the cooper's shop and the smithy. From spring until fall the peddlers flashed and jingled along the roads from village to village. The winter was spent in the shops, helping to make up the summer stock. At length long journeys were undertaken, even as far as the South, in large carts especially built for bulky loads, and protected from the weather.

While the tinsmiths were developing the art of salesmanship, the blacksmiths also were sending their work out, and building up a lucrative trade. It had taken some persuasion on the part of James North to convince his neighbors of the wisdom of sending their boys away to learn improved methods; but two of the boys, James North and Joseph Shipman, became the first manufacturers who built factories and employed outside help.

New Britain became known for the excellence of its articles of small hardware, even before the opening of the nineteenth century.

By the year 1830, the market for goods made here had become so great, that the village, with a population of less than three thousand, was already beginning to look upon itself as a manufacturing center. Flourishing, if small, factories were in operation along East street, on the north and south ends of the green where Main and West Main streets came together, and on the little water-power of Piper's Brook, which flowed down to Main street on the north side of West Main, and there crossed the street, and turned south on Elm Street, where there was a dam and a small artificial pond.

In these factories the future of New Britain was being shaped, along with their hooks and eyes, and bolts and screws and bureau-locks. For, in them, men were struggling with the three problems that New Britain had to solve if they were to be successful in their industries — the problems of Power, and Transportation, and Capital. Working together upon these mighty questions, the men of New Britain, grandsons and great-grandsons of the pioneer farmers of Great Swamp,—Norths and Stanleys, Shipmans and Mathers and Judds, and all the rest, developed and enriched those qualities which have changed New Britain from the village suburb of a farming community, into a rich and cosmopolitan city. They acknowledged their common purpose with an enthusiasm, and set about accomplishing it with a purpose and an efficiency, which, if shown by a single person, would have amounted to genius.

The success of New Britain, however, has been due from the first, not to individuals, but to the collective genius of all its citizens.

For about twenty years, between 1830 and 1850, New Britain fixed its attention upon the development of power. Millers, sawyers, and cloth-dressers were not the only ones making use of such water-power as was available. Jesse Hart came up from Hart Quarter to the center, and in 1825 he had a small shop on the bank of Piper's Brook, at the north end of the Park, where he made knives and forks, using water power to polish and sharpen them. The same brook was dammed into a pond on Elm street, a few years later, for the new brick factory of North and Stanley, the first to be built of brick in New Britain.

Piper's Brook also supplied water for the first steam engine used in a New Britain factory. This, tradition says, was erected

in a small shop for making machinery, located on Main street, and owned by the brothers William and Frederick Stanley. The machine-shop was closed for a time; but before 1842 its equipment was moved to a larger building at the center of Lake and Washington streets. Here machines were installed for the manufacture of bolts and hinges; and the Stanley Works was started.

The last, and largest, factory to use the power from Piper's Brook, was the "Lock Shop," which gave its name to the pond formed by its dam. The building was erected in 1835 and has only recently been displaced by a new building of re-inforced concrete.

It is a little strange to think of any of New Britain's companies in terms of a single horse power; yet one horse was literally the source of power for some small shops of the period, needing only a slight reinforcement of the hands of workers. The first shop of Philip Corbin is described as a "two-story wooden building, with a horse tread-mill in the cellar, and a lean-to at the rear of the building, containing two furnaces for melting ore."

It became clear to the leading spirits of New Britain's industries, as early as 1840, that they had outgrown both brooks and horses. Only by the introduction of machinery, driven by steam, could the growing demand for their goods be met. But, machinery was costly; and steam required coal, which had to be brought from a distance. The cost of labor and the time between mines and shops on the one side, and shops and markets on the other, had somehow to be reduced.

When coal began to be used in the factories, some of the owners provided large wagons drawn by pairs of extra large and strong horses, which carried finished work to meet the boats at Hartford or Middletown, and returned to New Britain loaded with coal. But the long pull to a point of connection with the rest of the country proved impractical, as well as expensive, for doing business on a large scale. To be sure, there was the turnpike roads, with public stages regularly carrying passengers and mails. They only aggravated the need of conveyances of greater carrying capacity, and greater swiftness. And there was the Farmington-New Haven canal, built to carry freight; but space was limited, and times of starting and arrival were uncertain.

So, in spite of, or because of, these meager connections with the markets for their goods, New Britain did not receive the final impetus which set her among the leaders of manufacturing, until the railroad was finished from New York to Boston. With a station at Berlin, and one a mile east of East street, New Britain was at last a part of the world of business. The problem of Power — answered by coal, the problem of Transportation — answered by the railroad; left one difficulty still to be met,— the problem of Capital.

It was out of the question for individuals any longer to carry the burden of financing the factories. Machinery meant coal in large quantities, meant new and strong buildings. It meant, also, increased production, and the call for numbers of workmen. We find the manufacturers of New Britain falling in line with the tendency of the times, and organizing into joint stock companies, and corporations. Their capital seems very small from the twentieth century point of view, ranging, as it did, from \$50,000 to \$150,000. It must have taken good courage, however, and confidence in the worth of their undertaking, for these men to ask their friends and neighbors to invest with them their not very large surplus. On the other hand, it took loyalty and confidence for the investors to hand over their savings to be used.

The increase of capital had immediate results, in new buildings and new machinery. The "Lock Shop" led the way, by forming a corporation in 1851, with a capital stock of \$125,000, and a change of name to "The Russell and Erwin Manufacturing Company." The "Stanley Works" was made a joint stock company in 1852. "P. and F. Corbin" was an organized corporation in 1854, and "The Stanley Rule and Level Company" followed in 1858. These remained for some years the only corporations.

The great change wrought in the village of New Britain by the tremendous development of manufacturing, was the human change. Machinery, quantity production, meant hands, meant people. Population began to increase at the rate of ten per cent. every year. The newcomers were for the most part, recent immigrants, bringing with them new customs, religions, standards of life and thought, to enrich and modify the old.



JUDD ELM IN WINTER

The Changing New Britain

FROM the period of 1850 dates a new phase in the development of our city. The new center of the town's civic and religious life had become established about the Central Park, or "Center," as most prefer to call it, in a situation which allowed for considerable expansion. Not one church, but five, graced its borders; and within a few minutes walk, the first Catholic church was already rising. Almost without knowing it, New Britain had grown out of Puritanism into a town whose government made no distinction between races and creeds.

The reasons for this were partly in the attitude of the State, and partly in the situation created by the rapid growth of the factories. Almost the first act of the factories, after incorporation allowed them to increase their capacity, was to send out a loud call for help. Published authorities do not tell us how this call reached the other side of the Atlantic, nor how the first response was made. The traditions of families now in the third and fourth generations in New Britain, may hand down the story. The archives of the factories may have records of the contracts with their first foreign workers. It is a fascinating story, which should be told some day.

Suffice it to say, the arrival of the first workmen for the factories from Europe, settled the destiny of New Britain as a cosmopolitan manufacturing town, and pulled her yet further apart from her kinsfolk and hereditary neighbors, Farmington, Worthington, and Kensington.

Up to the middle of the nineteenth century, the citizens of New Britain had been, with few exceptions, descendants of its founders, or its early settlers,—English, and Protestants. They had endured home-sickness and privation, to establish for their children the liberty of religion and government they so prized. But, their genius had created a demand which they alone could not sup-

ply; and the workmen who came to help in building the railroads and the factories, in laying out streets and in running the new machinery, were of different blood and religion, though of their language.

The Irish new-comers settled in the section about the lately relinquished parish center, at the corner of Main and East Main streets. They bought property, built themselves snug little houses, had a clergyman to look after their spiritual welfare in accordance with their own religious creed, and at once began to conduct themselves vigorously as belonging to the town.

The Irish were speedily followed by Germans. Their language was a barrier to acquaintance, and for a time they kept somewhat to themselves, in their colonies at the southern end of town, and in the northwestern quarter. They too, acquired homes of their own; and with their flowers, and flourishing gardens, added to the appearance of domestic thrift. Many of them, however, joined the congregations of the Protestant churches, and so became merged in the religious, and to a growing extent in the social life of the town.

Mr. Warren tells an amusing episode which happened in the High School, of the introduction of the first German pupil to the school:

Into the big school-room, the principal brought one day a new pupil who could speak only German. He was a ruddy-faced boy of about twelve. The other boys and girls gathered about him in wonder, at recess-time. He looked like the rest of them, but he could not talk to them, nor they to him. A teacher from the Normal School, who could speak some German, was called in, and he established communication with this stranger from a strange land. His name, he said, was Carl; an odd-sounding name to the Johns, Elijahs, and Andrews, of English descent. But in due time Carl showed himself to be one of them, for all his broken speech; he reacted like any boy, when pinched or pulled, and took his school punishments with a mingling of rebellion and good humor, like the rest of them. And all the while he was learning to talk English, in addition to the regular lessons of the class-rooms.

The problem of making citizens of these new inhabitants was one which New Britain shared with many other towns and cities of

the day; and wide were the differences of opinion, throughout the nation.

Men of English blood took their citizenship with great seriousness. It was a political right gained for them by the struggle and sacrifice of their fathers, and they counted the vote not only a religious duty, but a high privilege. After a period of dispute, an agreement was reached by which the states extended to all immigrants the citizenship, under certain limitations of race, education, and good faith.

The task of New Britain and towns like it, was henceforth to be, not only to make the immigrants into American citizens, but to make them feel like American citizens.

Chapter XXIV

The Town Hall for a Month

KENSINGTON, Worthington, New Britain; three parishes, or ecclesiastical "Societies," one town,—up to the year 1850. As long as all the citizens of the town were members of one of the churches, as well as inhabitants of one of the parishes, the sum of the parishes equalled the town, exactly. Town meetings, or elections, were held in the three parishes by turns, on the premises, if not in the building, of the Congregational church. But the equation ceased to be a statement of truth, before 1850. In New Britain at least, before that year, there were many living within the bounds of the parish, who had no connection with the Congregational Church.

The churches, moreover, no longer had any political authority. A Town Hall was needed; a place where the public records should be preserved, where the offices of the town government should be located, and where the elections and town meetings should be held. But, where should that Town Hall be built?

Upon this question the town, never really a unit in feeling, at length split. Of the three parishes, New Britain was, in 1850, by far the greatest in numbers, though not the largest in territory. Its population was 3,029, while that of the other two parishes together was only 1,869. With New Britain voters so greatly in the majority, what wonder that the site should be in New Britain?

This meant that Worthington and Kensington were bound to pay their proportion of taxes to support a Town Hall in New Britain,—a proceeding to which they naturally objected. They, therefore, petitioned the legislature for the right to withdraw from New Britain, and form a separate town, keeping the name of Berlin. New Britain, thus rejected, became a town involuntarily, as it were; and thus was compelled to pay for the new Town Hall wholly, instead of in part, as had been expected when the ample plans were made.

The building was erected, however, on the site chosen, opposite the South Church, on the east side of Main Street. It was not destined long to remain merely the seat of government of the town of New Britain.

Perhaps the burden of its erection was too great for the taxpayers. It may be that there was a genuine zeal for education on the part of an influential majority; certainly there was some shrewdness in their offer of the building to the state, in exchange for state aid to the new High and Grammar Schools. Whatever the motives, the building was bought from the town by a popular subscription, headed by that most clear-sighted and public-spirited citizen, Seth J. North, and handed over to the state to be used as a Normal School. Wings containing additional recitation rooms were added to the original square building, thereby giving space for the classes of the High and Grammar Schools. It has held the Grammar School, since then, up to the year 1925.

The exterior of the Town Hall, or Normal School, or Grammar School, has kept much of the appearance of the original structure, with the dignified square front, the small windows on the ground floor, along the sides, and the tall windows above them showing the height of the second story. On that floor was the large assembly-room of the Normal, and later of the High and even, for a time, of the Grammar School, with recitation rooms opening off from it in the rear. The ground floor was, in the early history of the building, divided into rooms for offices and store-rooms. In the basement was the first hot-air furnace ever used in New Britain.

The surroundings of the new Town Hall-Normal School were quite different than we find them in the twentieth century. The South Church was a substantial wooden structure, with a four-columned porch in front, a clock, and a tower. The Methodist Church, on the north side of the Walnut street corner, was smaller, and, if possible, even plainer. Two little factories were the only other buildings of any size in this vicinity, the shirt factory of Julius Parker, opposite the Methodist Church, and the jewelry factory of Churchill and Lewis, east of the South Church.

The new Town Hall was used by the people of New Britain for a civic reception of welcome to their most distinguished fellow-

townsman, Elihu Burritt, in recognition of his labors for international harmony, as a lecturer in various European capitals, and as an officer of Peace Conferences.

The transfer of the property from the town to the state took place while the Town Hall was still in process of building. Upon its acceptance, some alterations were made in the ground plan, and an additional wing was built on the east end. The Normal School opened to receive pupils, the fifteenth of May, 1850. The first regular town meeting was held at the Town Hall, in July. A few meetings for special purposes, and town committee meetings, were held there in the succeeding months, but the brief career of New Britain's first Town Hall closed almost as soon as it began.

The Borough Modernizes the Village

LET us complete our picture of the village, which so suddenly became a town, by noticing some of the more important particulars of its civic development in the decade before the Civil War.

New Britain in the fifties was much like a boy that was growing too fast. Everything was too short, or too narrow, or too tight somewhere. Things had to be let down and let out; and it soon became apparent to everyone that the only help was a complete new outfit! But the town government, under the act of incorporation drawn up when Berlin and Kensington withdrew, had no authority of its own to go in for any such expense. Again like the growing boy, New Britain took up its new responsibilities with zest. At the request of the town, the Legislature created New Britain a borough, in an act enabling it to levy taxes "for maintaining order, protecting property, and improving the welfare of its citizens."

The new borough included only the most busy and populous section of the town. The survey was made from the new Town Hall-Normal School building as a center, and placed the boundaries half a mile, roughly speaking, in every direction from that spot. Thus, Stanley street was the eastern boundary, the line through Grove Hill, the western; in length, the borough limits extended a little more than a mile, from the brow of Dublin Hill, to the foot of Arch street. It is interesting to note the fact that the official survey was made by a pupil of the Normal School.

The borough received a charter defining its powers and responsibilities. Its officers were a warden, six burgesses, and a bailiff. The first town meeting was held July 22, 1850, Mr. O. B. Bassett being moderator. The first borough meeting was held August 20th, and Mr. Frederick T. Stanley was elected the first Warden. Police officers, fire wardens, a street commissioner, and an inspector of weights and measures, were appointed. But this

was only a beginning; they outlined plans of abolishing public nuisances, and of keeping streets in order; and they made provision for a "lock-up."

As a village, New Britain was proud of its roads; as a town, the streets began to seem rough and unkempt; as a borough, it speedily decided something had to be done. Not long after the borough charter went into effect, a paved sidewalk was laid along the east side of Main street, and the streets around the central park were drained and graded, so that they were tolerably dry and hard. Other streets near the center of town were treated in the same way, until the borough began to take on a well-groomed and thrifty air.

One of the most desperate needs of the borough for the protection of its citizens was an adequate fire department. They already had one, of a sort, consisting of a bright red little fire engine, and a company of volunteer firemen, called the Niagara Fire Engine Company. They evoked great enthusiasm at dress parades and fire drills, in their bright red shirts, and manoeuvring their engine by hand. Personal courage, and even heroism were by no means lacking, if there was a need for it; but their value at fires was limited by the size of the nearest well, or the availability of Lock Shop Pond. The safety of public and private buildings was thus continually imperilled, because they were without adequate equipment, and without a water supply that could be depended on.

The needs of the factories were equally insistent, if they were to continue in the path of development they had marked out for themselves. It was time, also, that there should be arranged some way of providing water for private uses.

A whole chapter could have been given to the description of the wells, which stood in every yard near the kitchen door, and not far from the barn, if there was one. They were deep, and open to the sky, and protected by a wooden curb; by the time of which we are speaking many of them had been covered with a platform and equipped with pumps. The "moss-covered bucket" in the open wells was brought up by a windlass. If one looked in, one saw the sky reflected far below, green ferns and mosses growing out of clefts in the stone lining, and very likely, a pail or two containing a reserve of butter or cream hanging by a line at the side of the well.



PORTRAIT OF MAJOR SETH NORTH

THE earliest of New Britain's successful manufacturers. A leader in civic, educational, and religious movements in the town. Called
"Founder of New Britain."

Some families supplemented the well with cisterns for rain water, or a "rain barrel" at a corner of the house.

Wells, cisterns, and rain-barrels had a way of failing in dry weather, rather disconcerting to a borough whose population was growing so fast, and whose chief industries were at a loss for power, and dangerously exposed to destruction in the event of fire.

At length Mr. Frederick T. Stanley, with the consent and perhaps at the request of the borough officers, undertook to make a preliminary survey, and to suggest a plan for supplying the town with water. After investigating the sources of the springs and brooks in the hills nearby, Mr. Stanley and the civil engineer who was working with him, fixed upon Shuttle Meadow, which was then a boggy depression in the mountains to the southwest, rather than an actual lake, as a good place for a storage reservoir. From that point they suggested carrying the water to the top of Walnut Hill, whence it could be distributed.

The plan was carried out. The necessary pipes were laid to bring the water to New Britain, before 1857. When the work was at last completed, there was a great celebration on Central Park; during which, to the joy of the assembled crowd, the fountain that had been placed there spouted water a hundred feet into the air. It was only a matter of a few months' work, before pipes were carrying the Shuttle Meadow water to every part of the borough. The faucet replaced windlass and pump. The fire-engine, and its new associates, became a real protection instead of a show of enthusiasm. Factories found water enough to furnish steam power for many years.

There was another improvement, which though privately owned, was a public utility, and began to serve the people at the same time that the city water was made available. This was the manufacture of illuminating gas, which began to be used for lighting streets, factories, and houses, in the same year that the water was turned on at hydrants, factory boilers, and kitchen sinks.

New Britain, with its population of a little more than three thousand, became, in the fifties, one of the pioneers of free public education in the state, if not in the country. A free High School was at that time, almost unheard of, and even the free elementary schools were under suspicion.

The friends of education in New Britain in 1847 began a campaign to improve the schools of the town, and to extend the educational opportunities offered. They met with discouragements and delays which postponed any action for more than two years.

They did not cease their studies of the question, however. They were inspired and aided in their work by Henry Barnard of Hartford, who was devoting his very great talents to the development of a Public School System. Among the reforms which he was endeavoring to have adopted by the Connecticut legislature were, a careful grading of elementary schools, a standard of achievement for the grades, and establishment of free public High Schools, and of training schools for teachers.

In 1850, that was rather a large order. But New Britain helped him out, and herself too. When, in 1850, the New Britain committee in charge of public schools offered to the state the new Town Hall for a Normal School, it was with the understanding that a free public High School should be maintained in connection therewith; and that the elementary schools, in addition to being used as practise schools for Normal School students, should be graded, well equipped, and competently taught.

In 1851 the High School was opened, offering advanced courses to pupils who had finished the work of the elementary schools. The district schools near the center of the town were consolidated, with the name of the "Central Consolidated District." The state and town combined to enlarge the Normal School building. They were graded, after a fashion, into Primary, Intermediate, and Grammar, grades, and with the High School, formed the Model School.

We should not omit to mention, when considering the important step forward taken by New Britain for its schools, some of the well-known educators whose presence, or whose interest and counsel, made the advance possible. Among these may be named the two Hart sisters, of Berlin, Emma Hart Willard, founder of Troy Female Seminary, the first school offering advanced education to girls, who worked with Henry Barnard to provide training for teachers; and Almira Hart Lincoln Phelps, also founder of a girls' school, and author of text-books in science, who, as teacher in New Britain had "practiced normal methods" as early as 1823.

The president of the "Educational Fund Company" which raised money to buy the building for the Normal School, was Prof. Ethan Allen Andrews, of Stanley Quarter, undoubtedly the most famous scholar that New Britain has given to the world. Graduated from Yale, and professor of ancient languages in various institutions of learning for twenty years, he at length retired, and devoted his life to editing and annotating Latin texts. His Latin Lexicon and Latin Grammar were for years accepted as standards by leading colleges. Prof. Andrews was chosen to make the presentation of the Normal School to the Trustees for the State, in behalf of the town of New Britain.

Among early students of the school whose names later became well known, were former Governor Abiram Chamberlain, Hon. Theron Camp, former Commissioner of Insurance, William H. Hart, Charles S. Landers, Meigs H. Whaples, and Andrew J. Sloper.

As we have seen, New Britain had always had a library, even from the time of Dr. Smalley. The Lyceum, of the 1830 period, with its debates and lectures, was without doubt the pattern upon which, in 1853, the "New Britain Institute" was formed. The South Church and the Normal School also lent a helping hand in making the plan successful at the beginning,—the church, by putting on the shelves of the library the six hundred volumes which had formed its own parish library; the school, by providing the Institute with a president, and the reading-room with eager readers.

The early libraries were not public institutions. The parish of New Britain had no money to spend on books for the free use of the people. An entrance donation, and a small annual fee, provided the books, and that was about all the expense involved. But as parish grew into town there was a demand for a more generous policy, which would at least permit free entrance to a reading-room, where books could be consulted. After the Institute had been tested for five years, and found to meet a real need, it was, in 1858, incorporated by the Legislature. The act of incorporation begins as follows:

"General Assembly, May Session, 1858.

Resolved by this Assembly: That D. N. Camp, C. B. Erwin, F. T. Stanley, G. M. Landers, Oliver Stanley, Lucius Woodruff, T. W. Stanley, John B. Talcott, William A. Churchill, and W. B.

Smythe, their associates and successors, be, and hereby are, constituted a body corporate and politic, by the name of the New Britain Institute to establish, keep and maintain a Library, Reading Room, and System of Public Lectures."

The first president was the principal of the Normal School, J. D. Philbrick, who had been active in pointing out the need for a library. During his term of office, the library and reading room were opened, in the Miller Building, just north of the Humphrey House; and there it remained, during the decade we are now considering.

Those of this later generation who read the act of incorporation quoted above, will readily acknowledge that the Institute has been true to its mission in two particulars, and has even added to its services; but they will naturally wonder what has become of those lectures, or if there ever were any.

The Institute did maintain a yearly lecture-course for many years, with a nominal fee for members, and a slightly larger fee for others. Some famous men and women were on the lists of speakers, and some whose fame, though bright at that time, was not enduring. But the time came when lectures were largely replaced by newspapers and magazines. Audiences fell off; men who once would have been available for lectures preferred to give the world their thoughts in printed form. In short, the lecture, from having been a popular institution, became a specialized work with small groups. The funds of the Institute were therefore, as we shall see, diverted to other uses.

Chapter XXVI

"The Center" in the Fifties

A VISITOR to New Britain in the middle of the nineteenth century, would not have been obliged to ride into town on horseback, as were the visitors of the eighteenth century. He would have come by train, and have put up at the Humphrey House.

The Humphrey House was something like a popular institution, and New Britain people took great pride in its air of dignified prosperity, and its metropolitan accommodations. It stood opposite the green, a square mansion of brick upon a stone foundation, with a square porch and an impressive flight of steps. Indeed, it still stands there, behind a conventional office building front with the usual corridor entrance and plateglass show windows. As a hotel, it had few of the qualifications now deemed necessary in a house of its kind; there were no bathrooms, elevators, nor steam heat, not to mention conveniences of such recent date as electric lights, telephones, and call bells. Yet it was a very comfortable abode for men who came to town on business; and some residents of New Britain made it their home. It could offer two essentials at least,—large, clean, rooms, and abundant and well cooked meals.

The Humphrey House was for a few minutes several times a day, the focus of attention to passers-by. It was the point of arrival and departure for the stage connecting with the railroad at Berlin; and both events were announced by a bugle call. Dinner-hour in the hotel was announced to the public, by a colored porter who came out onto the porch beating a Chinese gong. The feature which gave the townsfolk a sense of partnership in the glories of the Humphrey House, however, was the large hall on the third floor, which was used for all sorts of large social and semi-public gatherings — balls, concerts, fairs, lectures, exhibitions, and political rallies.

Can we imagine a curious young person of our own time, set down by the coach at the Humphrey House in the fifties, and deter-

mined to find out all about the Main Street of that day? Let us suppose, then, that his arrival has been duly trumpeted before the house; that he has been ushered in to dinner by the gong, and that at length replete with native good things, he has come out on the porch to look about.

He sees a stretch of rough, green lawn, much worn in the middle by the feet of ball players, and enclosed by a low fence. Along the fence are young maple trees, thrifty and shapely. No path crosses the "park," and no walk surrounds it. A well, carefully covered with plank, is at the southern end, and near it, just outside the fence, is the public weighing apparatus. The streets around the green are neither paved, nor otherwise hardened; hardly more than country roads, muddy or dusty according to the weather. Our visitor sees no trolley tracks, no cars, automobiles or bicycles; no traffic police, and very little traffic. There is a load of hay on the public weighing machine; a business man goes by driving his own delivery wagon; a farmer passes with a flapping bundle of underwear, which has been stitched at home by his womenfolk, for the "knitting shop."

The newcomer from the twentieth century in his interest and curiosity about the New Britain of the fifties, is impelled to take a walk. As he goes north from the Humphrey House, he sees a fine residence in process of being moved, and learns that the First Church is about to build a handsome new meeting-house on that site. There is no Church street. In its place on Main street is a low wooden building, which he learns is the post-office. Just north of this, and opposite West Main street stands a large building occupied by a general store. There are other stores on Main street, in any one of which the curious visitor may learn a good deal about the lately created town, which in size is not much more than a village.

We can picture a conversation between the visitor from the twentieth century, and one of the merchants, somewhat as follows, the stranger merely prompting his host with a word, now and then.

"Very glad, I'm sure! Flour, sir! Do you mean rye, or wheat? Wheat flour is five dollars a barrel. No, it does not come in smaller packages, but I keep one barrel open, to sell a few pounds to those who can't afford to pay so much at once. The farmers raise rye, and use it. Those who work in the factories buy wheat. Oats?

Horse fodder, sir! What did you say it was used for? Breakfast food? I never heard of such a thing.

"Vegetables? We could not sell them if we had them, sir. Everybody has a garden, from which we get plenty of good eating in summer. The housewives are thrifty, and dry some fruits for use in winter; but, no, sir, we have no such process as that which you call canning. Our fruits are chiefly home-grown; we can give you oranges and peanuts, however. Some folks are learning to eat tomatoes, and some are even growing them. We have heard of bananas, but grape-fruit is something I know nothing about. We have pretty good apples here, mostly from self-sown native trees. They make good cider. There are a few imported trees, chiefly Rhode Island Greenings. And I have heard that Professor Andrews has set out a good many trees of a late red apple. I believe they call them Baldwins.

"Fish? We sell mackerel out of brine, and salt codfish, and dried herring. In spring we have shad from the Connecticut; peddlers drive over with it from Rocky Hill. We used to have salmon, occasionally, but they are never caught around here nowadays. They tell us there are plenty of salmon out on the Pacific Coast. Perhaps some day the railroads will find a way to bring us what we can't raise here.

"There's one butcher shop; but a man goes around two or three times a week with a meat cart. He doesn't have a great trade, for most people raise their own pigs and chickens.

"Lights? You mean candles? They are twenty-five cents a pound; and most people prefer to buy them at that, rather than make them. Whale oil is high-priced; whales are getting scarce. We don't sell much; most people use camphine, made from turpentine I think. I hear of a new kind of oil, dug out of the earth, mind you! They call it kerosene. We don't carry it yet, but it looks as though we'd have to soon. There is some talk about forming a gas company here, to put gas lights in the streets and houses. Yes, sir, we're pretty progressive in New Britain.

"You want to know about clothing? We can show you woollen cloth, which we can make up into suits to measure. They keep ready-made clothes in the store just up the street, but they don't

fit anybody that I ever saw! Boys in short trousers? Why, short trousers went out of style a long time ago. Col. Lee dressed in short trousers; but nobody wears them now, boys or men. We have lately begun to carry ready-made underwear, made right here in town by the Knitting Company. It's knitted by machine, you understand, and finished by hand. A good many women who have a little spare time on their hands, do the finishing on the garments at home. There used to be a great trade sewing hooks and eyes on cards; but since buttons came in style, business has fallen off.

"There is always a call for cowhide boots, but not much for shoes. When people want fine shoes, they usually have them made. We have great sales for a new article of foot-wear, gum shoes, or rubbers, as we call them. Mr. Goodyear has made a very useful invention there!

"No, we do not carry furniture. We have a few rolls of carpeting, but most people use rag carpets all through the house except in the parlor. There are several places in town where people can get their rags woven into strips. Up the street further you can buy chairs and tables, and they will make other things to your order. We have few pianos, but a great many melodeons. Some of the church choirs are beginning to use them, instead of the violins and flutes; and I hear that the Baptist Church has ordered an organ.

"You ask for stationery? I can give you letter-paper in double sheets, and foolscap, but no pads. A book would be the nearest thing to what you ask for. Quill pens are not much used now; steel pens are taking their place, and a few of our leading business men even use a gold pen. Slates are used in the schools, but we sell lead pencils for use with copy-books. The Webster spelling-book is the one in general use here; he was a neighbor of ours, you might say, living in West Hartford. The National Preceptor is the best book I know of as a reading book for older pupils, but that seems to be going out of use, I'm sorry to say.

"A cash register? I hardly know what you mean, sir. The truth is, we do not handle a great deal of cash. Much of our trade is by barter. Farmers bring in their butter, eggs, and cheese, and take their pay in goods from our shelves. A fine day, sir. I'm glad you came in. Good day, sir!"

The visitor from the twentieth century (let us imagine), continues his adventures by walking out West Main street, and making note of the landmarks as he goes.

The corner where the building of the First National Bank now stands was then a spot vacant and rather low, not to say swampy. The Baptist Church stood just west of the vacant lot, a white building with green blinds, and a brick basement in which was a printing office. West of the church was a large, low, dwelling house, and, beyond that, the Episcopal Church. At the corner of West Main and Washington streets was a school-house with a large play-ground.

Further west, the inquirer could see ample evidence that New Britain in 1850 was still a community chiefly agricultural. For the street, hardly more than a country road, was dotted with farms. A substantial farm-house, painted red, built in the familiar style with central chimney and long rear roof, stood between High and Cedar streets. Behind it was a barn, with outbuildings in which cattle were occasionally slaughtered. Walnut Hill was a cow pasture; Cedar street, a recently opened and unimproved road; Russell street, a meadow, and the ground between the two low-lying and swampy, and threaded by a brook. There was really a grove on Grove Hill, and only one or two houses stood near there. Lexington street did not exist; opposite Vine street, in the middle of the road, stood two forest trees, the relic, our visitor learned, of a school-house play-ground. Near by was another farm-house with long rear roof, and a big barn and barnyard, directly on the street.

Turning at this point, the visitor walks back to the Center, and down Main Street along the west side of the park. Here are three prosperous looking houses facing the park, each surrounded by a spacious yard which is shut off from the street by a white painted fence. The house nearest the West Main street corner was built for a school, and has an imposing front with white columns. Miss Thirza Lee once kept there an "academy for young ladies." Her father's residence is the next house to the south. The house furthest south is that of Dr. Samuel Hart, long the leading physician of the village. He is also a farmer. Behind his house stand his barns, and beyond them a meadow. The traveler recognizes the neighborhood, and realizes that the path to the barns is the ancestor of Court street.

Between Court and Walnut streets stand four dwellings, and on the corner of Walnut a bare, spireless church, the Methodist. The new Town Hall is across from it, on the other side of Main street. Between it and the Humphrey House are two or three stores, and two or three small dwelling houses. Behind these, plainly to be seen from the street at the driveways, are stables, in which horses are kept to rent for pleasure, or for trucking purposes.

Thus the little tour of the interested visitor from 1920 ends at the Humphrey House, where it began, leaving him much food for reflection, and some for wonder.

Chapter XXVII

Editors and Lecturers 1850—1860

UP to about the middle of the nineteenth century, the towns and cities of the United States were not in close communication with one another. To be sure, travel was easy, because of good roads between the large centers; and mail service was well established. But even so, the time was long between the sending of news or opinion, and its receipt. The building of railroads had an immediate effect upon the mutual acquaintance of places widely separated; and also aided the growth of newspapers by delivering them at a distance while their news was still fresh.

One other circumstance, a tragic one, made the different parts of the country eager to learn what the rest of the nation was thinking about. That was the bitterness of feeling over the questions of slave-trading, and of the right of sovereign states to withdraw from the union.

In this state of national excitement, the daily newspapers came to have a position of great influence. Little towns like New Britain received almost all their information about public affairs through them.

New Britain itself had no daily paper before 1860, and not even a weekly until 1857. Moreover, the two largest cities of the state at that time, Hartford and New Haven, were still so small that their newspapers were largely devoted to local news and local politics, and had no regular paid news service from the rest of the country.

Those citizens of New Britain who took enough interest in national affairs to follow them day by day, either borrowed a New York paper or subscribed to one. For these had regular correspondents in Washington, and their editorial writers gave opinions as men of authority. They also made use of the telegraph, which, though neither so swift nor so sure as it is now, did carry the news of a day from Congress, so that New Yorkers read it at the break-

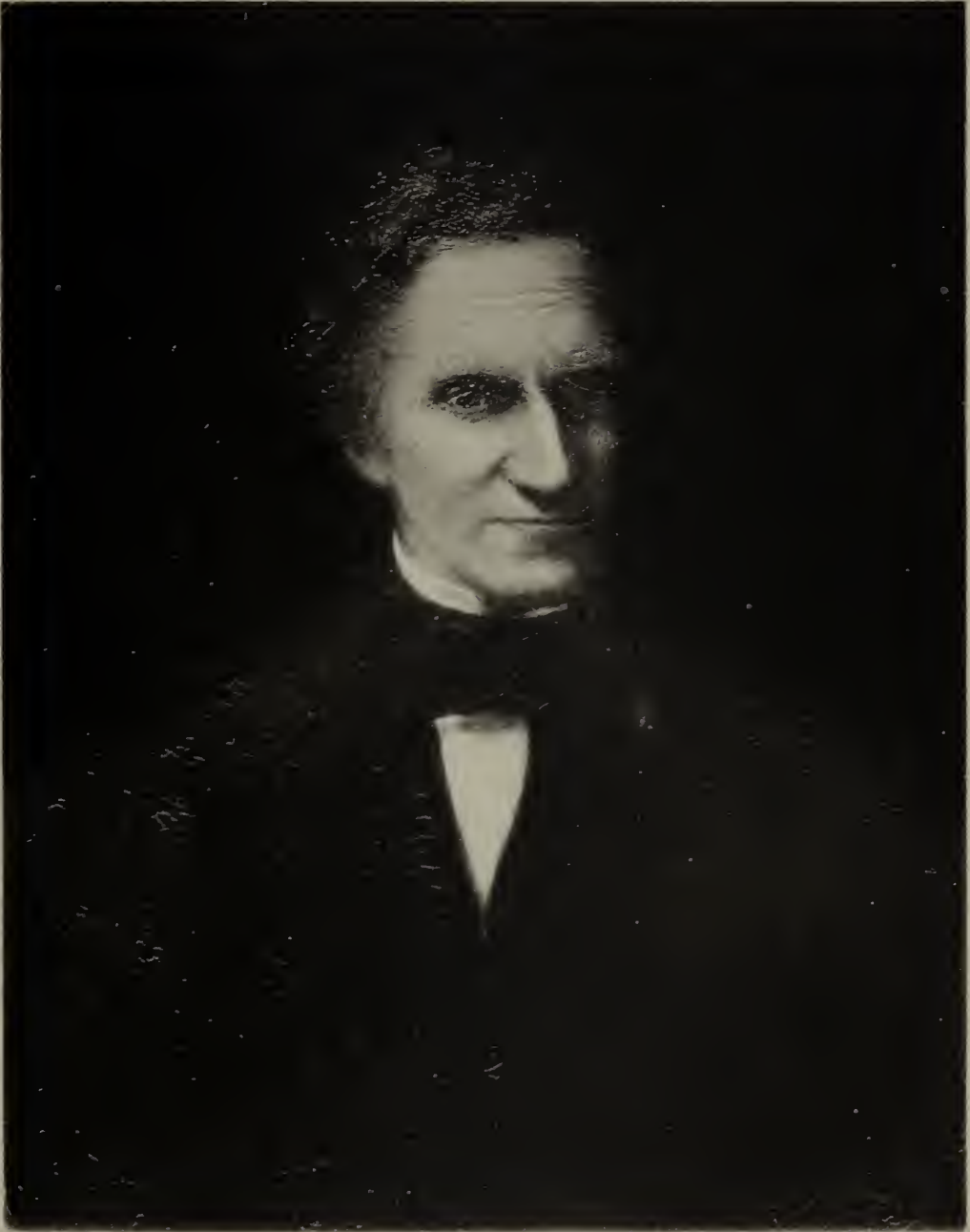
fast table the next morning, and towns as far away as New Britain had it by dinner time.

If the news came from California, it was brought half-way across the continent by pony-post, to a point whence it was relayed by telegraph. News from Europe came by slow steamships, up to the time of the Civil War, when the Atlantic cable made communication practically instantaneous.

The first news-stand in New Britain was opened in the middle fifties. It was located in a wooden building a few rods north of the post-office (which was then near the corner of Church street), and opposite the Baptist Church. That was a lively neighborhood, at noon every week-day, when the Berlin coach arrived, bringing the mail and the bundles of papers. Here regular customers and casual purchasers, on their way to or from work, could buy the Washington news of the day before, just as they can today.

The editors of the days just before the war were men whose opinions carried great weight. They frequently added lecturing to their editorial activities. We find the names of at least four editor-lecturers who spoke to New Britain audiences during this period: Horace Greeley, of the New York Tribune, Henry Ward Beecher, equally famous as preacher and as editor of the Christian Union, Joseph R. Hawley of the Hartford Courant, and Elihu Burritt of our own town, who was a world-famed writer and lecturer on the duties of nations, before he began the publication of his weekly, "North and South," in 1857.

Before 1860, New Britain was without a daily paper; but weeklies were started, and flourished their brief time, and then were either discontinued, or were sold out to the next bold man who believed he had something to tell the world. Some of the names are interesting: "The Advocate," "The Chronicle," "The Connecticut Organ and New Britain Journal," all ran their little race between 1850 and 1855. Elihu Burritt's weekly had a name suggestive of its mission,— "North and South." It was printed by L. M. Guernsey at his shop in the basement of the Baptist Church. He bought the paper from Mr. Burritt, and during the war published it under the name, equally suggestive of its new policy, of "The True Citizen."



PORTRAIT OF ELIHU BURRITT

"THE Learned Blacksmith," self-educated in ancient and modern languages, while earning his living at his trade. Ambassador of international understanding and good will. Vice-President of Peace Congress at Brussels, Secretary of Peace Congress at Paris. Lecturer on Peace in Great Britain and Europe. Consular representative of United States at Birmingham, England. Author of essays on Emancipation, Cheap Postage, World Peace.

Mr. Guernsey's largest press was a hand press, worked by a lever; and inked, between impressions, by a boy; his type was taken from cases and set up by hand, and after use, was redistributed. Mr. Guernsey's shop was only equipped for printing in a small way; yet he did for some years publish the New Britain weekly newspaper, under one title or another. His office and shop in the basement of the Baptist Church became the telegraph office and news stand as well. It was thus a center of community life and was the point of direct contact between New Britain and the rest of the country during the stirring and anxious times from 1857 to 1866.

"The New Britain News" was a weekly started by Valentine B. Chamberlain in 1860. When Mr. Chamberlain joined the Union Army in 1861, the "News" was merged, along with "North and South," in "The True Citizen."

Of all the publications dated and printed in New Britain, those which made the strongest impression on the outside world, and which carried the name of New Britain most widely, were some modest little pamphlets, or "tracts," signed by Elihu Burritt. There were various titles, on the subjects of cheap postal rates, international arbitration and world peace, as well as on the themes of liberating the slaves, and states' rights. For years the meaning of Mr. Burritt's messages, and the purity of his motive, were misunderstood and laughed at. He was derided as a moralizing, impractical talker, even by those who knew him best.

Only in recent years has the world begun to acknowledge that Mr. Burritt's ideas are practical and wise. Have we not adopted cheap postage as a necessary measure? Have we not adopted international arbitration as the means of settling disputes between nations, which once would have led to war?

Through these pamphlets of Mr. Burritt's, New Britain came into contact with the rest of the world, not only as a receiver of news, but as the home of a great idealist.

New Britain Finds Itself Part of a Nation

WHEN we read of great events in the history of the United States, our first question very naturally is, what part did *we* take in this, and that? Were we on the right side, and can we count any heroic or dramatic action to the credit of our own town? Thus, we wonder how the people of New Britain thought and felt during those seething, stormy years before the Civil War.

A few facts about the New Britain of that day we must keep in mind, if we are to get an adequate picture; scores, if not hundreds of small towns in the United States were going through the same conditions. New Britain had especial reason in the decade just before the Civil War, to be concerned for her own progress. She was wrestling with practical and material difficulties in her own situation, concerning business, politics, education, and civic affairs. She was seeking to burst the bonds of village conservatism, and to emerge into a field of bold progress and varied activities. Small wonder if, at first glance, the consciousness of national relations seems rather faint. People were too busy establishing their own small part of the national existence, beyond the fear of ruin, to worry about Congressional quarrels and compromises, so long as they were not bothered in their immediate duty.

We have seen from the record of local events that this was the case. Parish, town, and borough within the space of a few months; ninety per cent. increase in population, distributed through ten years; new streets, new pavings; water-system, gas-system; new Normal and High Schools; and building to meet these growing needs; did not these constitute a crowded and eventful life within the town itself?

New Britain people seem, on the whole, to have followed the news of the day with keen interest, and to have discussed national questions with more or less warmth. We hear of significant trifles showing the state of feeling, such, for example, as the popularity

of Longfellow's lines — "The Ship of State," which were read, quoted, declaimed, and greeted with demonstrations of popular enthusiasm; and a poem almost as popular with the young people, written by one of the Normal School teachers, which described the flight of a runaway slave through a southern swamp.

With Elihu Burritt in their midst, they could hardly have been advocates of rushing into war to test the strength of the Union. We learn that in 1852, when the death of Henry Clay became known, the bells of the village churches were tolled, out of respect to him. When Daniel Webster died, a few months later, the same tribute was given.

The Missouri Compromise was repealed in 1854, rejoicing the South and enraging the North; New Britain made no demonstration in favor of war even then. But a consciousness of their identity with the rest of the country in time of stress is proved by the emphasis with which they celebrated Independence Day, that year. It was a truly democratic celebration, showing the simplicity of tastes and the friendly character of the people, as the following announcement, reproduced from the printed hand-bill, shows:

"The grove near the residence of O. B. Bassett, Esq., is the place selected for the Celebration. The Exercises will consist of a Grand Procession of the Schools and Citizens, the Singing and Declamation by the Pupils of the Schools, Reading of the Declaration of Independence, speeches by the President of the Day, Elihu Burritt, and other gentlemen, and a Collation. Exercises at the Grove will commence at 11 o'clock A. M. The Schools will assemble at 9 o'clock A. M., the First District at the Normal Building, Third and Fourth at the Basement of the South Church, Second, Fifth, and Sixth at the Methodist Church. Citizens will assemble at the Park at 9½ o'clock A. M."

It would be interesting to know exactly what Mr. Burritt's speech was about. Mr. Burritt could not be accused of the least lack of patriotism; and his interest in his neighbors and friends was warm. But, in his belief, civic pride and love of country were forces making for peace, not war. His speech undoubtedly touched upon the problem of keeping the peace between North and South. He was a friend of human liberty, however, as much as he was a friend

of peace; and exerted all the influence he could bring to bear, to liberate all slaves by enforced purchase, or, as he preferred to call it, by "Compensated Emancipation."

About the time of the Fourth of July celebration, in Bassett's Grove, Mr. Burritt was speaking in many cities and towns on this subject. But he did not take account of the anger and prejudice that are aroused when men think their personal rights have been enjoined.

So ready were men to avenge their rights with violence, that on a day in 1856, Charles Sumner, Daniel Webster's successor in the United States Senate, was attacked, at his desk in the Senate Chamber, by a member of the House of Representatives from South Carolina. What could any theory of Compensated Emancipation do to quell the rage that was roused by the alleged insult, and by the attack? When Congress passed the Dred Scott decision, in 1857, what power had a speech on the brotherhood of man, or an appeal to reason, to bring the foes to a friendly understanding? The editor of the Hartford Courant, Joseph Hawley, came to New Britain and spoke about the Dred Scott case, taking the side of the war party.

Mr. Burritt worked on with unshaken courage as long as he could. He started his newspaper, "North and South," in 1857; and it had for a time a wide circulation throughout the country. There were poems and sketches by New Britain contributors, and a series of articles describing New Britain industries; the leading articles and editorials were written by Mr. Burritt upon the purposes nearest his heart.

At the same time that "North and South" was appearing with its editorials counselling calmness and reason as a road to peace, another paper, published in Washington, was printing a serial with an ideal no more noble, but urging a course of action directly opposite. The story was Mrs. Stowe's "Uncle Tom's Cabin," and its popularity grew with every instalment, until it was read and played in every town of the North.

The voice of Lincoln summed up the conflicting opinions of the North on the vexed problems of the time. By it little towns like New Britain were awakened to the consciousness that their existence was a part of, and a growth of, the national life.

Chapter XXIX

New Britain and the Civil War

THE sixth of November, 1860, Abraham Lincoln was elected the sixteenth President of the United States. The very next day, the legislature of South Carolina summoned a State Convention. When it met, the state voted to secede from the Union; and Governor Pickens, on the twenty-fourth of December, announced the fact to the government at Washington. Immediately, Fort Moultrie and Castle Pinckney were siezed. Thus, war loomed before the country as a terrible necessity, if the Nation was to be kept together.

The North, as we may read in histories of the Civil War, followed with keen anxiety the thoughts expressed by the new President, and read with breathless excitement his farewell address to his fellow-townsmen, and his inaugural message. For the four months between November and March, the whole nation was in suspense.

Then, in April, a shot flew over the waters of Charleston harbor. Fort Sumter, a garrison of the United States Army, was fired upon! The echoes of that shot rolled through the North, like a summons. Cities flamed with the national colors, New Britain among them. The progress of the seige was eagerly read in the newspapers; and men gathered in groups, perplexed yet determined, as in our own day we saw them do when the United States entered the World War.

The story of the heroic defense and final surrender of Fort Sumter is to be found in every history of the United States. What we cannot find there is the story of the part the little town of New Britain played then, and in the events that followed.

Fort Sumter surrendered, after a three days' seige, on Sunday afternoon, the fourteenth of April. That very evening, a mass meeting was held, in the Center Church, with pastors of all denom-

inations on the platform, and people of all creeds in the pews. It was the first war meeting in Hartford County, and one of the first in the state.

One thought inspired the speeches which were made, and upwelled in the hearts of those who listened: The Nation must be preserved undivided. Enthusiasm reached the highest point when Valentine B. Chamberlain, with a speech described as "thrilling," presented to the view of the audience a portrait of Major Anderson, the heroic commander of Fort Sumter, which some of the ladies had wreathed about with laurel leaves.

New Britain boys were not slow to offer themselves for enlistment. Within a week, drills were being held, and before summer, Connecticut regiments, including New Britain companies, were moving toward the front.

Four companies, chiefly from New Britain, and one company with half its number from New Britain, counted seven hundred men who went to the war. Their names, together with the names of their regiments, may be seen on tablets inside the Soldiers' Monument in Central Park. Their flags, tattered and worn and soiled, are preserved in the western corridor of the State Capitol at Hartford.

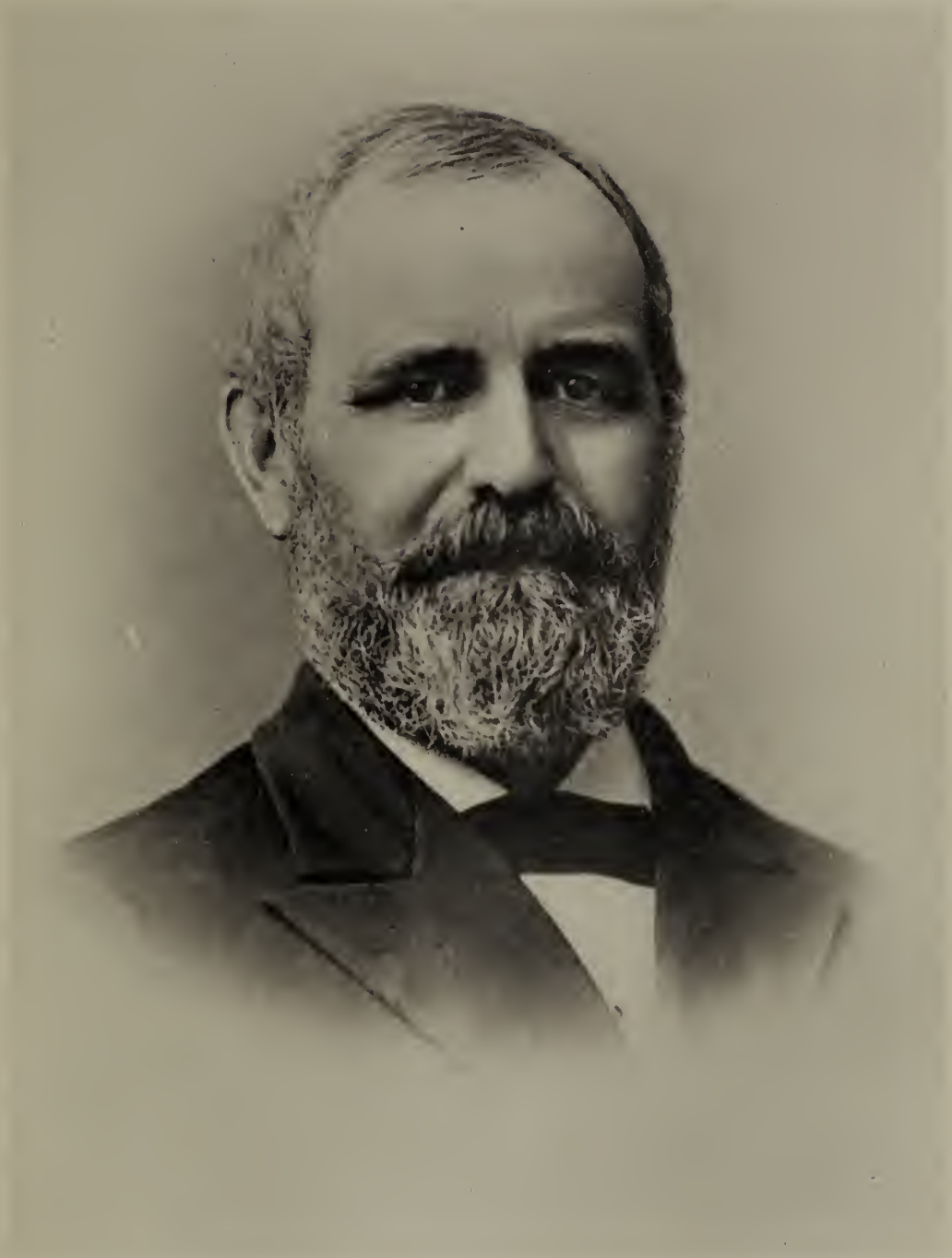
We have evidence, not only by hearsay, that the women of the village did their part in war work just as generously as did the women of the larger New Britain in the years 1917-18. The list herewith is reprinted from "The True Citizen," in the week following Feb. 1, 1862.

List of articles sent by the "*loyal women*" of New Britain, to the U. S. Sanitary Commission, from Oct. 14th, 1861, to Feb. 1st, 1862.

Money raised by contribution, \$354.52.

Seventeen Boxes, containing —

92 Blankets,
182 Bed Quilts,
199 Sheets,
235 Pillow Cases,
98 Bed Ticks,
173 Pillows,



PORTRAIT OF
JUDGE V. B. CHAMBERLAIN

EDITOR, soldier, banker, judge. Truly a
“friend, and fellow-citizen.”

23 Pillow Ticks,
 84 Towels,
 65 Napkins,
 14 Handkerchiefs,
 202 Shirts,
 94 pair of Drawers,
 235 pair of Stockings,
 66 pair of Slippers,
 106 pair of Mittens,
 4 Dressing Gowns,
 9 Hair Cushions,
 1 Blouse,
 1 pair of Pants,
 82 Pin Cushions,
 37 Thread Cases,
 1 Bushel Dried Apples,
 1 Box Dried Cherries,
 3 Packages of Farina,
 18 Pounds of Castile Soap,
 1 Box of Stationery,
 1 Backgammon Board,
 32 Books — Magazines, Pamphlets, Papers, Tracts, Soap,
 Pins, Thread, Tape, Bandages, and a *quantity* of old linen and cotton.

The story of the war has no place in this local history. But it is valuable to us to have this brief summary and interpretation of one who watched the news from day to day during those anxious months.

“The sublimest moment of the war,” says Mr. Warren, “came in January, 1862, when President Lincoln signed the Emancipation Proclamation. Now we began to have a clearer vision of the issue; to believe that the war was waged not merely to preserve the Union, but also to destroy the evil thing which was a threat to the life of the Union. (We recall that St. George not only rescued the maiden, but killed the dragon!)

The decisive event of the war took place at Gettysburg. We knew, after that, that the fight was really won.

The ideal behind the causes for which our men were fighting

was expressed by President Lincoln in the Gettysburg speech, made at a memorial meeting on the battlefield: "They died here, that the government of the people, by the people, and for the people, should not perish from the earth."

The most joyful moment occurred in April 1865, on the day of the Connecticut election of state officers. The polling-place in New Britain was in the conference room of the old North Church, at the corner of Main and East Main streets. Men of all political parties were in the room, some sitting at tables, some standing and talking. Suddenly a man rushed into the room waving a telegram, sprang upon a table, and shouted, "Richmond is taken!"

The most tragic moment of the war came at the very close, in the assassination of President Lincoln. It is only necessary to say that New Britain joined with the rest of the nation in grief; that the Center Church was again the scene of a mass-meeting; the church was draped in black, instead of the red, white, and blue; the meeting was one of mourning, for the President who had led the country through the War, back to Union."

Where so many held honorable records, it would be hard to choose among them names to mention. A list may be found in Professor Camp's History, of Officers of Companies, together with brief biographical sketches of a number. Among the most heroic, as well as picturesque, episodes in which New Britain men had a part, was the war record of Capt. V. B. Chamberlain as told by Major Kinney in The Encyclopedia of Connecticut Biography. The story follows:

"In August, 1861, Mr. Chamberlain enlisted as a private soldier in Company A, Seventh Connecticut Volunteers. The company was recruited by General Hawley of Hartford. Soon after his enlistment Mr. Chamberlain was elected Second Lieutenant of the company; with his regiment he participated in the occupation of Hilton Head, South Carolina, and in the brilliant siege of Fort Pulaski. In July, 1862, he was promoted to the captaincy of his company, and during the following year was engaged in arduous service in South Carolina and Florida. He was in the memorable assault on Fort Wagner, July 11, 1863.

"When the column was formed for the attack he was given the

command of the right wing of the picked battalion of his regiment, gallantly led by Col. Daniel C. Rodman. This brave little band of heroes charged across the sand beach, and up the slope to the very crest of the fort in the face of a raking fire of shot and shell which poured upon it with deadly effect.

"Capt. Chamberlain was one of the handful of men who scaled the parapet, and were captured within the fort, the impetuosity of their assault upon the rebel fort having carried them so far that escape was impossible.

Out-numbered and over-powered, they were led away to prison, and not until March 1, 1865, was Captain Chamberlain released; he was transferred from Columbia to Charlotte, North Carolina, and was paroled at Wilmington, North Carolina, where he found his regiment."

VI
The City
of
Many Nationalities

Chapter XXX

New Britain Prepares for Expansion

IN the year 1860, the population of New Britain was 5,512. In 1870, the town numbered 9,480. As in the decade before 1860, New Britain also in the decade after 1860, nearly doubled the number of its inhabitants. These ten years marked a period of progress. With determination, the borough worked to establish business prosperity, educational advancement, and comfortable living conditions. At length the borough in 1870 was granted a city charter by the Legislature.

The events to be set down to the credit of this decade are few, and, if thought of singly, not striking. From time to time a new industry was started here, or a new factory built, and new workmen brought their families here to live. Some of the more important manufacturing enterprises started during the sixties, have already been mentioned; others were the American Hosiery Company, The Union Works and the Vulcan Iron Works.

New Britain business men recognized the necessity for doing their own banking in town, and for providing a Savings Bank. The New Britain National Bank was incorporated in 1860, with a capital stock of \$200,000. Its first building is standing just west of the present National Bank building, on West Main Street. In 1862 the New Britain Savings Bank was incorporated. Its early building was at the south end of the Park, next to the old Methodist Church at the corner of Walnut street.

New Britain improved its communications with the outside world by obtaining a branch railroad to the main line at Berlin, which was opened in 1865. The post-office was moved in 1861 to a building of its own,—a one-story wooden structure with a front porch, at the northwest corner of the Park. The weekly newspapers which had come and gone in the years before the end of the war, in 1868 ceded their good will and their subscribers to the New

Britain Record, which began publication on the property which it still occupies. The Record was a weekly for some years, and may justly boast of being the oldest of the New Britain papers.

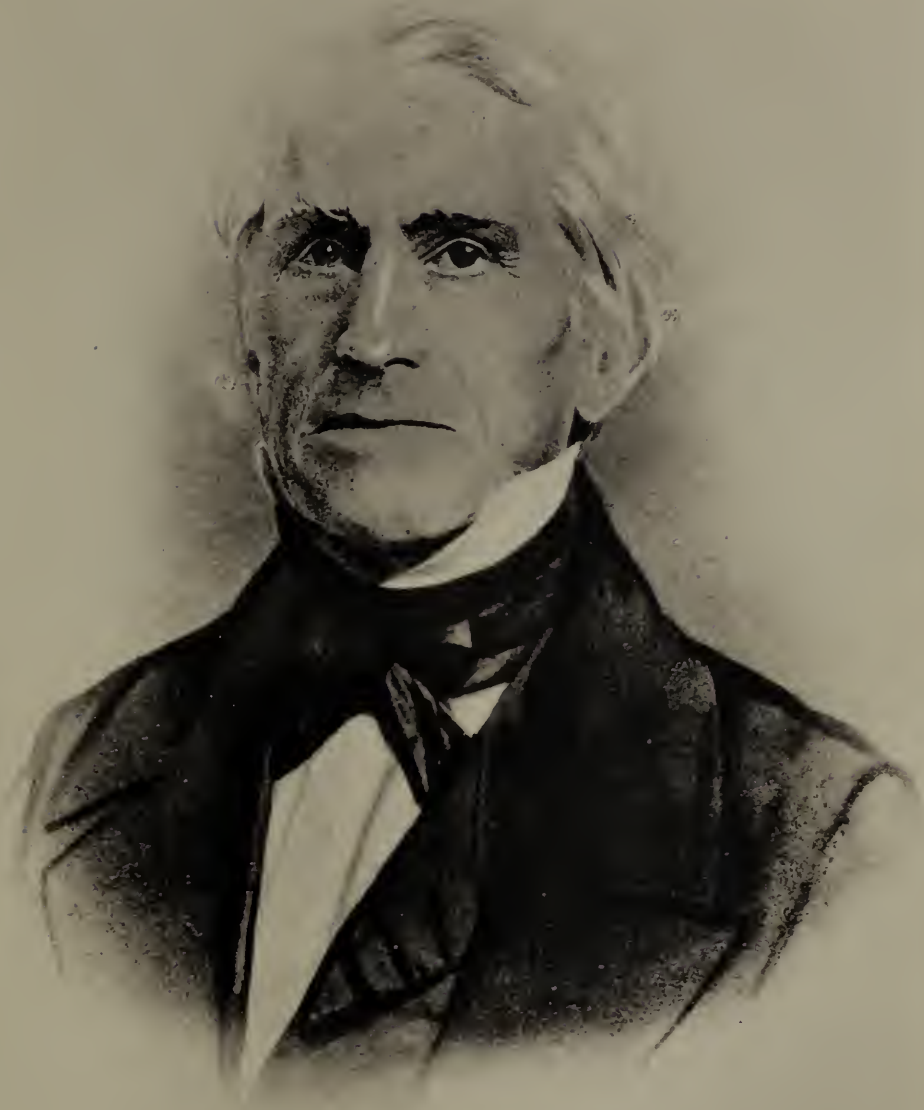
New Britain's growing population demanded increased accommodations in the churches.

The South Church which had occupied a small wooden building of the type of architecture to be found in every New England village, outgrew its shell, and built the stone church which still adorns the triangle at the south end of the Park. It was dedicated in 1868. The Baptist Church had a similar experience, removing the white wooden building which had answered all the needs of the congregation for twenty-five years, and erecting a brick church on the same site, at the corner of Main and West Main streets. To older residents of the city, the memory of this church, with ivy picturesquely draping its walls, and birds busy and noisy among the leaves, is especially pleasant.

Other churches were taxed to the limit of their capacity, and were obliged to make alterations to enlarge the main audience room. St. Mary's Roman Catholic Church completed the transepts and chancel of the church building in 1862, and added the sacristy the following year. The Methodists enlarged their church, and improved the appearance of the exterior in 1869, as did also the Episcopalians.

Plans for civic improvement were talked of and sketched out before 1870, to be slowly carried out, as the city needs grew up to them. One of the most extensive of the plans should be mentioned in connection with this decade, because it brought about the purchase of the tract of land for Walnut Hill Park, in 1869.

Changes and expansions took place in the schools, also. Something of the new hope which inspired the nation, was felt there. The idea of offering a course of study leading to the higher institutions of learning, and making it free for all boys and girls of ability, stirred the ambitions of both pupils and school authorities; and from 1865 we can date a new life in the schools. The change appeared in a definite plan of work, offering more subjects of study, and carrying them through to a logical stopping-point. In the High School, a fixed course of studies for each term was laid out,



PORTRAIT OF
PROFESSOR ETHAN ALLEN ANDREWS

EMINENT classical scholar, lexicologist, grammarian, and editor. "He left upon the little town his imprint, of a character high-minded and lovely."

promotions were based upon strict examinations, and the end of the course was marked by the diploma of graduation.

The teacher called to the High School to inaugurate the new stage of the school's existence, was John H. Peck, a graduate of the New Britain Normal School, and of Yale. He came to the High School in 1865, and remained for thirty years at the head. He was an educator with clear and definite ideals, and a teacher whose watchword was thoroughness. The High School soon gained a reputation for efficiency, good discipline, and interesting work. Mr. Peck was a classical scholar, and himself took charge of the students of Latin and Greek. He also led the school in choral practice. A debating society became one of the most popular exercises of the school. There were classes in science and mathematics, of course; but no experimental work for some years. Such a thing as a course in stenography was unheard of, and so were courses in the trades and mechanic arts. Those were in the schools of the future. The New Britain High School of the seventies and eighties was abreast of the best educational practice of those days.

New Britain Begins Work as a City

THE city charter was looked upon by some people as a means of facilitating the city's business; by others, as an added responsibility which the borough was hardly ready to assume. We can reconstruct, somewhat, the discussions which must have taken place over the charter, when we find that although granted by the Connecticut legislature in 1870; it was approved in a meeting of the borough, in April, 1871, by a majority of one vote! The area of the city was somewhat larger than that of the borough; and the powers of the borough government were included in the city government, together with others more extensive, such as provisions for issuing bonds.

The first mayor was Frederick T. Stanley. In his first message to the council, in September, he explained the necessity of a sewer system. A board was appointed to examine the situation and to make recommendations; and in 1874, under the supervision of a board of Sewer Commissioners, the work of construction was begun. This board, with Mr. George M. Landers as chairman, labored faithfully for years without pay, to establish a system of drainage and sewerage for the city, which should be adequate in view of future expansion, as well as for the needs of the present. That they worked under difficulties, may be understood by anyone familiar with the situation of New Britain. How well they succeeded, was attested by the sanitary condition of the city, for years after the completion of the task.

The sewer of the seventies appropriated the flow of Piper's Brook, which was buried beneath the surface until it left the city boundaries. Into the main trunk, branches were carried from all sides. A similar arrangement, flowing south, was begun at the end of this period.

That settled the problem for a number of years. In the light

of the city's enormous growth, and of the advance of modern sanitation, the question comes up again, from time to time. The next move will perhaps be a combination with neighboring towns, or else the adoption of a sewerage system by the state.

The decade from 1870-1880 brought a further expansion of the school system. All the schools were consolidated under the supervision of a school board and a superintendent. The Rockwell School was built in 1869, and the Burritt School in 1871, giving accommodations for all children in the lower grades.

The land for Walnut Hill Park was acquired in 1869. It was then a high mound-like hill, with a long sloping meadow to the west. The hill was almost treeless; the meadow had a few fine oaks, and a clump of walnut trees near the eastern edge. It remained for some years, to all appearance a stretch of natural open field and hillside. A winding road led to the reservoir set in the top of the hill, and connected with the oval track around the meadow. These roads the city improved; and both planted trees on the slopes of the hill, and encouraged private planting there. In 1876 two organizations celebrated the Centennial of the Declaration of Independence by planting trees in the park: The Putnam Phalanx planted an oak, and placed beneath it a boulder, and a cannon. The cannon, which was supposed to have been used in the Revolution, was a traditional object of contention in town. It had been used more than once to celebrate a political victory; and nearly every year, it mysteriously disappeared. Its last disappearance was from its place beneath the Putnam Oak, into an obscurity from which it has never emerged.

The second tree was an elm, placed near the head of Park Place by the members of Stanley Post, Grand Army of the Republic, in memory of their young comrades who had fallen in the Civil War.

The public took great pride in the park, in its early days. For some years it was the custom for High School classes, before graduation, to plant a tree there. The track around the oval meadow was a kind of informal race-course for bicyclists as well as for horsemen. And the view from the top of the hill was as popular then, with all sorts of people, as it is today.

Three names must be mentioned in connection with New Brit-

ain's story between 1870-1880, because they carried the name of the town to the outside world.

Deacon Alfred Andrews, who died in 1876, was an abolitionist who lived to see the triumph of his cause. He was also a genealogist and historian of note, the author of genealogies of the Andrews and Hart families, and of a complete historical and genealogical record of the First Parish of New Britain.

Elihu Burritt died in 1879. After a career of incessant labor, both here and abroad, in behalf of a closer union between nations, and of permanent peace, he passed the latter years of his life quietly among old friends and neighbors in New Britain, interesting himself in all good causes. He established two "Missions," in small buildings which he himself gave for the purpose, at the southern and the western extremities of town. Here he gathered the young people of the neighborhood for socials, literary exercises, and, on Sundays, religious instruction. Though he would never have thought to name them so, they were really Community Centers.

Mr. George M. Landers was New Britain's first representative in Congress. After serving in the Legislature and the Senate of the state, he was elected to Congress in 1874 and 1876.

Nor must we omit mention of the new newspaper, The New Britain Observer, which was started in 1876. Like its neighbor and friendly rival, it was for some years a weekly summary of the local news; and neither had any especial telegraph or cable service. The interesting and important fact was, that New Britain was by this time large enough to maintain two local newspapers; and at the same time to keep in contact with the country by numerous subscribers for Hartford and New York dailies.

The Cosmopolitan City and its Opportunity

OUTWARDLY, the last twenty years of the century in New Britain were years of quiet growth along lines of development already indicated. Underneath the surface, however, new problems were perplexing those who had the city's welfare at heart.

New Britain was fast becoming a city in fact as well as in name. The street railway, at first a horse-car road, was electrified, and the center thus came within easy reach of the remote parts of the city. The character of Main street changed, at first slowly, then all at once, until at the end of the century hardly a private residence was left along its length. As for the so-called "park," it has indeed remained a spot of green lawn and shade in the midst of brick and stone. It has been adorned with the Soldier's Monument, where Memorial Day exercises are held annually, and it is the scene of the annual civic Christmas Tree Celebration; but aside from these two occasions, it serves chiefly as the meeting point for arriving and departing trolley cars.

A proof of New Britain's growth in the first part of this period was the absorption of the "Observer" in the "Herald," a semi-weekly which in 1882 became a daily newspaper.

The High and Grammar Schools, as well as the Normal School, by 1880 had outgrown their cramped quarters in the building; and the Normal School was moved, in 1883, to the building which was then considered the shining peak of modern school architecture, on the eastern slope of Walnut Hill. The High School moved up into the Normal School's old hall and recitation rooms, and the Grammar School spread itself out over the former High School room as well as its own, and for another dozen years the question of school space seemed to rest. Grade schools were built in the eastern and western parts of the city. At length, in 1896, a new High School was built, at the end of Franklin Square, and the one-time Town

Hall and Normal School became known to a new generation as the Grammar School.

Public improvements went on rather slowly until the end of the century. The name of Cornelius B. Erwin should be remembered in thinking of this period. He showed his affection for his adopted home by generous gifts in his will, to the New Britain of the future. Through his bequests, Walnut Hill Park began to be a park in fact, as well as in name; it was planted with masses of shrubbery, and otherwise improved. He made possible the building of the Erwin Home, the Soldier's Monument, and the Parish House of the South Church. Perhaps the best known and most universally popular of his gifts was that which provided a home for the Library of the New Britain Institute.

The building of the Library marks the beginning of a shift in the civic center of the city, which began to be predicted a little earlier. Business has captured the center; the civic and religious activities seek room to expand. Thus, the Library building was soon matched by the new Government building of the Post-office. The Baptist Church followed, and then St. Mark's Episcopal Church. Truly, in New Britain, the star of empire takes its way westward!

The twenty years from 1880 to 1900 showed an advance in population which was almost appalling. In 1880, the numbers were something less than 14,000; in 1900, something more than 28,000. As Mr. Warren vividly puts it, to the New Britain of 1880, another New Britain was added before 1900. If we were describing the New Britain of 1920, we should have to multiply by two again.

By far the greater part of that second New Britain, (and of the third as well), consisted of recent immigrants. Before 1880, newcomers were chiefly of Irish or German blood; the Scandinavians were predominant next. These were for the most part people who came to the country not as fugitives or unfortunates, but as thrifty people seeking opportunities for their children. They settled here, and became citizens. Their children mingled in the schools, and grew up as Americans. They became merchants, skilled workmen, school teachers, or business men and women; good citizens, with an inborn respect for the ideals which had animated the pioneer immigrants to Great Swamp in their years of hardship and labor.

The end of the century brought a remarkable change. Many causes combined to set the tide of immigration to these shores, from eastern and southern Europe. These more recent settlers differed greatly from the earliest settlers, in the back-ground of racial memory and experience that they brought with them. Keen observers, students of racial characteristics, tell us that they read, in the faces they see in New Britain streets, the intellectual heritage of Greece, the unconquered free spirit of the mountain races, the mysticism from provinces along the eastern border, as well as the practical good sense characteristic of the north, and the warm-hearted and beauty-loving nature of the southern nations.

Nationalization by assimilation, under such circumstances, is not to be thought of. The balance is not sufficiently large, on the side of the heirs of the Puritans. But the newcomers have some contribution of their own to offer toward the evolution of the American character. Their actions as citizens and as individuals are the resultant of their remembered experiences of the old life and their impressions of the new. Through them the stream of the racial gifts from all parts of the world mingles with American idealism and freedom and order, to give it new depth and richness and vitality.

The external changes in New Britain have been chiefly a matter of multiplication. All three of the old parish centers are now busy spots of the city. The streets connecting them no longer take a nap between eight and twelve o'clock, and one and five, but are alive with wide-awake folk going about their occupations, all day long. Churches, markets, and clubs for each nationality occupy buildings, some of them historic, some new and fine.

But, where is the old New Britain? Has it disappeared altogether, is it underneath the surface, or is it cherished only in the bosoms of a few who love the past? None of these explanations is entirely true, and none is altogether wrong.

Democracy, universal industry, a certain forthright simplicity, are qualities for which New Britain is no less distinguished in its cosmopolitan days, than it was in the earliest time. The tradition of religious influence has retained its place in the modern community. Every group, little or big, has its church and its devoted

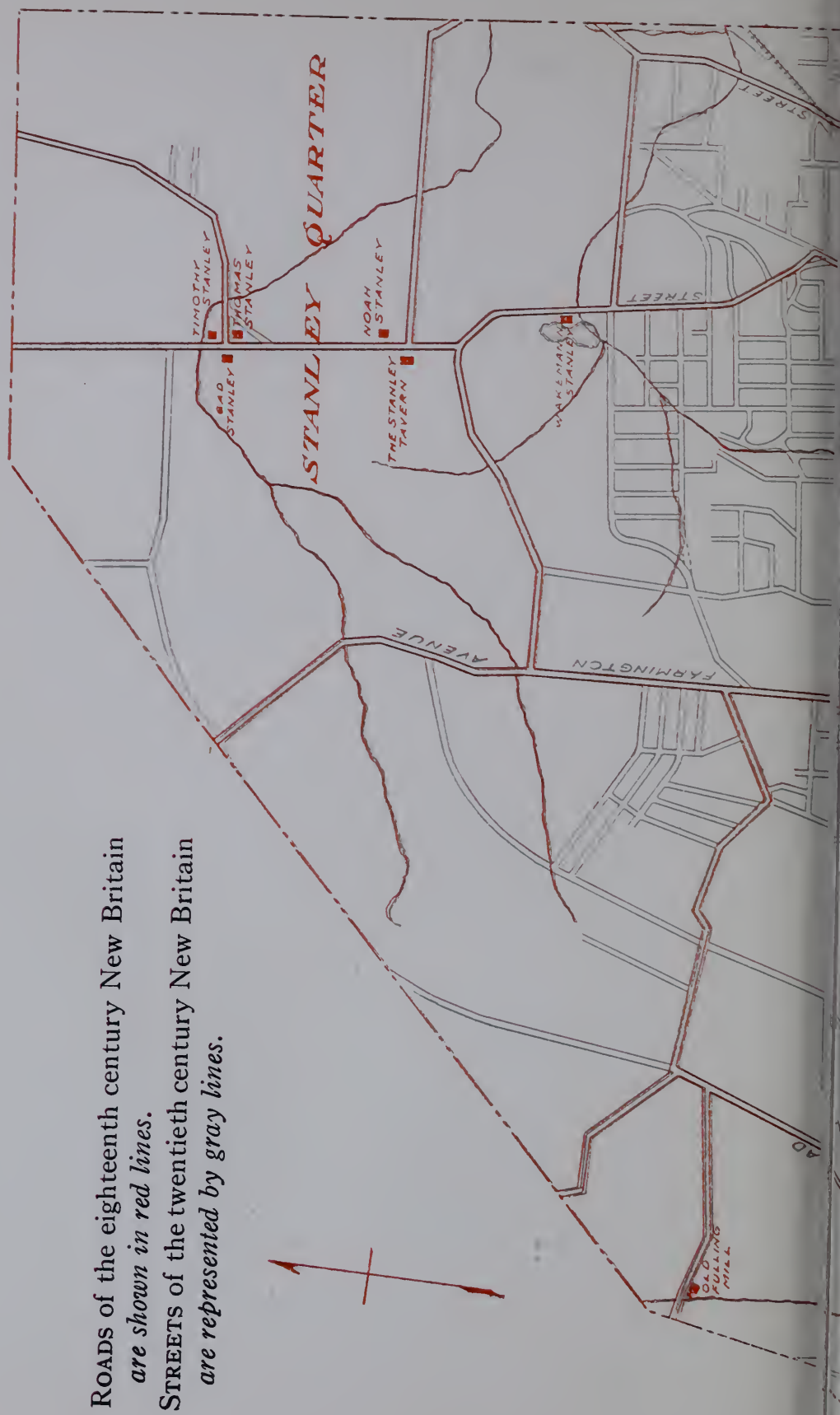
pastors, some of whom have done great service to the city as well as in their own parishes. Friendliness and co-operation among the churches of all denominations are the rule.

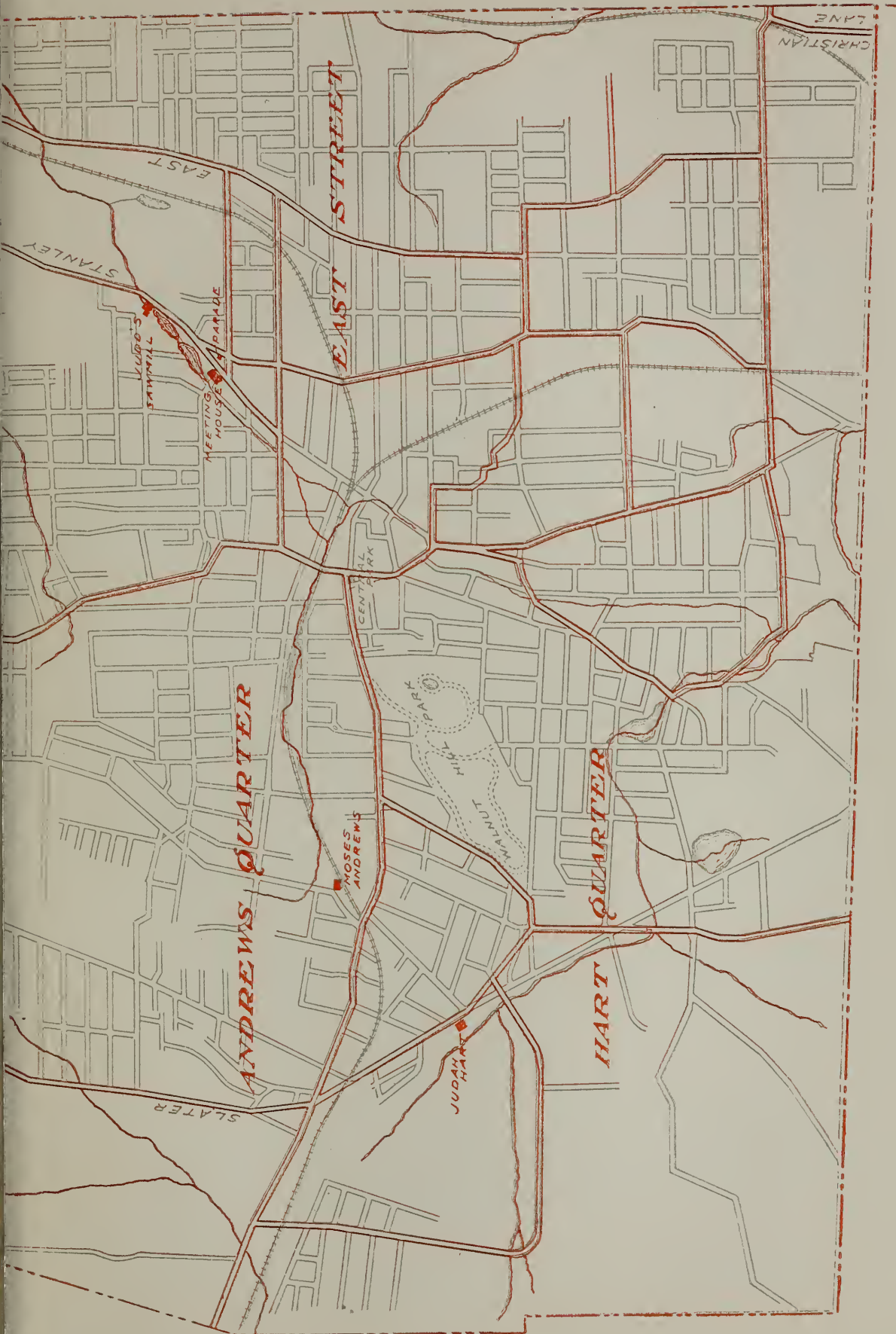
The old, homogeneous Society is forever gone. In this age of multitudinous complexity, such an anachronism could not exist, except in some village backwater. But certain of its characteristics still remain; and others might with reason be revived, for their possible bearing on the new day.

Map of New Britain
in Two Centuries

New Britain in Two Centuries

ROADS of the eighteenth century New Britain
are shown in red lines.
STREETS of the twentieth century New Britain
are represented by gray lines.





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